

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION.

R E P O R T

FROM

HER MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS

ON

A G R I C U L T U R E.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY GEORGE E. B. EYRE AND WILLIAM SPOTTISWOODE,
PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,
FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

1882.

[C.-3309.] Price 6d.

CONTENTS.

	Page
COMMISSION - - - - -	5
WARRANT APPOINTING TWO ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONERS - - -	7
RETIREMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION - - - - -	8
REPORT - - - - -	9
SUPPLEMENTARY MEMORANDUM BY LORD VERNON - - - - -	34
Do. do. MR. STANSFELD - - - - -	37
Do. do. MR. CHAPLIN - - - - -	37
Do. do. MR. CLAY - - - - -	39
Do. do. MR. HOWARD - - - - -	42
Do. do. MR. PATERSON - - - - -	42

HEADS OF REPORT.

	Page
Bad Seasons	24
Foreign Competition	24
Local Taxation	25
Rates	25
Agricultural Labour	25
Education	27
Agricultural Education	27
Rent	28
Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act	28
Land Laws	29
Cultivation of Land	29
Dairy Farming	30
Adulteration	30
Compensation for Unexhausted Improvements	30
Restrictive Covenants	31
Law of Distress	31
Tithe Redemption	32
Railway Rates	32
Ministry of Agriculture	32
Conclusion	32

COMMISSION.

Whitehall, August, 14, 1879.

THE Queen has been pleased to issue a Commission under Her Majesty's Royal Sign Manual to the effect following :—

VICTORIA, R.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith, to Our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin and Councillor Charles Henry, Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Knight of Our Most Noble Order of the Garter, President of Our Most Honourable Privy Council; Our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin and Councillor Walter Francis, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, Knight of Our Most Noble Order of the Garter; Our right trusty and well-beloved Cousin and Councillor John Poyntz, Earl Spencer, Knight of Our Most Noble Order of the Garter; Our right trusty and well-beloved Augustus Henry Baron Vernon; Our right trusty and well-beloved Councillor George Joachim Goschen; Our trusty and well-beloved Sir William Henry Stephenson, Knight Commander of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath; Our trusty and well-beloved Robert Nigel Fitzhardinge Kingscote, Companion of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath, late Lieutenant-Colonel of Our Regiment of Scots Guards; Our trusty and well-beloved Henry Chaplin, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved John Clay, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Joseph Cowen, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Mitchell Henry, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Charles Howard, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved James Lennox Napier, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Robert Paterson, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Bonamy Price, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved John Rice, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved Charles Thomson Ritchie, Esq.; Our trusty well-beloved Benjamin Bridges Hunter Rodwell, Esq.; Our trusty and well-beloved William Stratton, Esq.; and Our trusty and well-beloved Jacob Wilson, Esq., Greeting :

Whereas We have deemed it expedient that a Commission should issue to inquire into the depressed condition of the Agricultural interest, and the causes to which it is owing; whether those causes are of a permanent character, and how far they have been created or can be remedied by legislation.

Now know ye that We, reposing great trust and confidence in your knowledge, discretion, and ability, have authorised and appointed, and do by these presents authorise and appoint you, the said Charles Henry, Duke of Richmond and Gordon; Walter Francis, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry; John Poyntz, Earl Spencer; Augustus Henry, Baron Vernon; George Joachim Goschen; Sir William Henry Stephenson; Robert Nigel Fitzhardinge Kingscote; Henry Chaplin; John Clay; Joseph Cowen; Mitchell Henry; Charles Howard; James Lennox Napier; Robert Paterson; Bonamy Price; John Rice; Charles Thomson Ritchie; Benjamin Bridges Hunter Rodwell; William Stratton; and Jacob Wilson to be Our Commissioners for the purposes aforesaid.

And for the better effecting the purposes of this Our Commission, We do give and grant unto you, or any five or more of you, full power and authority to call before

you, or any five or more of you, such persons as you shall judge necessary, by whom you may be the better informed of the truth on the subjects herein submitted for your consideration, and every matter connected therewith, and also to call for, have access to, and examine all such official books, documents, papers, and records as may afford the fullest information on the subjects of this inquiry, and to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever.

And Our further will and pleasure is, that you, or any five or more of you, do report to Us with all convenient speed, under your hands and seals, your opinion on the several points herein submitted for your consideration.

And We further will and command, and by these presents ordain, that this Our Commission shall continue in full force and virtue, and that you, Our said Commission, or any five or more of you, may from time to time proceed in the execution thereof, although the same be not continued from time to time by adjournment.

And for the purpose of aiding you in such matters, We hereby appoint Our trusty and well-beloved William Augustus Peel, Esq., to be Secretary to this Our Commission.

Given at Our Court, at St. James's, the fourteenth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine, in the forty-third year of Our reign.

By Her Majesty's Command.

RICHARD ASSHETON CROSS.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith, to Our right trusty and well-beloved Councillor Chichester Samuel, Baron Carlingford, and Our right trusty and well-beloved Councillor James Stansfeld, Greeting :

Whereas We did by Warrant under Our Royal Sign Manual, bearing date the Fourteenth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine, authorise and appoint Our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin and Councillor Charles Henry, Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Knight of Our Most Noble Order of the Garter, together with the several Noblemen and Gentlemen therein named, or any five of them to be Our Commissioners to enquire into the depressed condition of the Agricultural Interests, and the causes to which it is owing ; whether those causes are of a permanent character, and how far they have been created or can be remedied by legislation.

Now know ye that We, reposing great trust and confidence in your knowledge, discretion, and ability, have authorised and appointed, and do by these presents authorise and appoint you the said Chichester Samuel, Baron Carlingford, and you the said James Stansfeld to be Commissioners for the purposes aforesaid, in addition to and together with the Commissioners whom We have already appointed by the above-mentioned Royal Warrant.

Given at Our Court, at St. James's, the fourth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and eighty, in the forty-third year of Our reign.

By Her Majesty's Command.

W. V. HARCOURT.

THE RIGHT HON. G. J. GOSCHEN, M.P., retired from the Commission on his appointment
as Special Ambassador at Constantinople - - - - 7th May 1880

EARL SPENCER, K.G., retired from the Commission on appointment as Lord President
of the Council - - - - - 19th May 1880

LORD CARLINGFORD and THE RIGHT HON. JAMES STANSFELD, M.P., were appointed
Additional Commissioners - - - - - 5th June 1880

LORD CARLINGFORD retired from the Commission on appointment as Lord Privy
Seal - - - - - 2nd May 1881

MR. RICE ceased to act as Commissioner on being appointed a Sub-Commissioner under
the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

IN continuation of our Preliminary Report of January 14th 1881, we have now the honour to submit to Your Majesty our final Report, together with the further evidence of witnesses and additional reports from our Assistant Commissioners. We have been deprived, however, of the assistance which we were led to believe we should receive from the Assistant Commissioners for Ireland.

Before we proceed, in obedience to Your Majesty's commands, to "report our opinion upon the several points submitted for our consideration," it will be convenient to state briefly the substance of the more important portions of the voluminous evidence which has been brought before us.

The Reports of our Assistant Commissioners, supplemented by the evidence of numerous witnesses, present a full and detailed account of the existence and extent of agricultural depression, and the classes affected by it, as well as of the causes to which it is attributed. ENGLAND
AND WALES.

Although the evidence shows that agricultural distress has prevailed over the whole country, the degree of it has varied in different counties, and, in some cases, in different parts of the same county.

Mr. Coleman (whose district comprised Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cheshire) found that Cheshire, though seriously affected by agricultural depression, had not suffered to anything like the same extent as many other counties. He states in his Report that in Cumberland and Westmoreland "the seasons have been very much less trying than in general." When he was examined before the Commission in March 1882, he said that since his report was written, the farmers in those counties had a very bad season in the winter of 1880-81. In his report on Durham he says that in 1880, while the quality and the condition of some corn crops were much injured, "the root crops were excellent, grass was abundant, and oats generally above the average." The result of Mr. Coleman's investigation in Lancashire led him to the conclusion that "farming" in Lancashire had not suffered so severely as in many other parts, although no "doubt much money had been lost in the last few years." In Northumberland, Mr. Coleman does not consider the depression so serious or deep-seated as that which was said to prevail in the midland and southern districts. Although in Yorkshire agricultural depression exists in almost every part of the county, yet "the degree varies greatly." The rainfall having been less than in the Midland counties the crops did not suffer so much; but on strong clay lands "where drainage is defective" and arable land prevails, the losses have been very serious.

In the eight English counties of Mr. Doyle's district (Gloucester, Hereford, Monmouth, Oxford, Salop, Stafford, Warwick, and Worcester), agricultural depression is reported to have prevailed to a greater extent than in the counties previously referred to, and the whole agricultural community to have suffered more heavily "than at any former period within the memory of this generation." This view appears to be fully confirmed by the detailed statements of owners, agents, and occupiers in these several counties.

The prevalence of agricultural depression appears to have varied more in the Welsh than even in the English counties. In the border counties, Glamorgan, Denbigh, Flint, in which the English system of husbandry generally prevails, there has been more distress than amongst the hill farmers in the remoter parts of the Principality, who depend chiefly upon the rearing of stock. Amongst these, however, the losses in sheep have been very great; in some cases disastrous.

In Mr. Druce's district (comprising the counties of Bedford, Buckingham, Cambridge, Derby, Essex, Hertford, Huntingdon, Leicester, Lincoln, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northampton, Nottingham, Rutland, and Suffolk) agricultural depression has been "very severely felt over the whole of it," though not in an equal degree. The depression "has been felt very much more in some counties than in others, but no one county

" of the fifteen has altogether escaped. The county of Derby has suffered less, and " the counties of Huntingdon, Essex, Cambridge, Bedford, and Buckingham more " than the others." Mr. Druce is of opinion that Huntingdonshire has suffered most of all, and Essex and Cambridgeshire next, Essex rather more than Cambridgeshire, but both very much. The north part of Derbyshire is the only part of Mr. Druce's district of which he is able to report as not having suffered. Mr. Druce's report contains, as indeed do those of his colleagues, striking illustrations of the ruinous effects of the prevailing depression. In the autumn of 1881, repeating a visit which he had paid to the county of Essex in June 1880, Mr. Druce found that " the depression was in no way mitigated, but on the contrary, that the state of the country " was worse than it was in the preceding year. There are a very large number of " farms in the landlords' hands, some of which are practically though not actually " uncultivated, and others cultivated by the landlords. As seen in several parts of " the county the state of agriculture was deplorable." The general tenour of Mr. Druce's report upon other portions of his district, is of the same unfavourable character.

In Mr. Little's district (which comprised Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Berks, Hants, Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall) there appears to be, as in the other districts, considerable difference in the extent and severity of agricultural depression. In Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire, and Dorsetshire he found great and general depression; and in Somersetshire (except in the extreme west of the county) great depression prevails. But neither in Kent nor in Devonshire or Cornwall does depression appear to have been so severely felt; he attributed the partial exemption of Kent to its proximity to the Metropolis, and of Devonshire and Cornwall to the character of their husbandry.

In Lincolnshire the condition of the small freeholders is deplorable, many of them being unable to pay the interest on their mortgages. Farmers of all classes, large as well as small, have suffered severely. Some small occupiers are unable to meet their engagements, and several of them are now obliged to give up their holdings. The farming classes generally are suffering under very great depression.

7001.

38,157.

34,325.

59,676.

GARDENS.

The effect of the depression has been very severely felt by the rural clergy, whose incomes are derived from glebes. Several cases were brought to the notice of our Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Druce, in which " agricultural depression had compelled " clergymen whose incomes were derived from glebes to give up their livings." Although Mr. Druce did not make special inquiry into cases of this description, the facts which came to his knowledge, and which are very fully detailed in his Report, show conclusively that the clergy whose incomes are derived from glebes have been very heavy sufferers indeed. The facts stated by Mr. Druce are confirmed by others, and still more strikingly in the evidence of Mr. T. Willson. Mr. John Walter, M.P., suggests as a remedy for this serious liability to loss by a class who can ill afford it, that power should be given to sell the glebes and to invest the proceeds by paying the same into the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners or Queen Anne's Bounty, or some other corporate body.

50,416-22.

55,906.

SCOTLAND.

The Reports of our Assistant Commissioners for Scotland, Messrs. Hope and Walker, give very full details of the condition of agriculture in the several counties of that part of the kingdom. Depression has been felt there with greater or less severity, as in England, and is generally attributed to the same causes.

The details which are furnished in these Reports of losses sustained by farmers, of changes of tenancy, of farms vacated, and of abatements of rent, indicate a condition of the agricultural interest in Scotland in all essential respects similar to that which has been described in the Reports of the Assistant Commissioners for England.

Legislation has already dealt with two grounds of complaint, upon which considerable stress appears to have been laid by Scotch farmers,—the over-preservation of ground game, and the law of hypothec.

LAW OF HYPOTHEC.

The effect of the abolition of the law of hypothec is alleged to be unsatisfactory upon grounds which may be thus summarised:—

The landlord has no hypothec preference over the crops, but whenever six months rent shall be due and unpaid, he has a right to demand security for such rent and

for one other year's rent in advance, so that in effect the provisions of the old Act of Sederunt of the Court of Session, 1756, which, upon a year's arrear of rent gave the landlord a right to security for six years, have been revived in a modified form under the existing Act. 42,835.

The general conclusion to be arrived at from the reports of the Assistant Commissioners is that in nearly every county of England and Scotland, and in some parts of Wales, distress of unprecedented severity has been experienced by the agricultural community. This conclusion is confirmed by the evidence of a considerable number of independent witnesses, by statements of farm account, which exhibit very heavy losses, by the number of farms which have been thrown upon the owner's hands, and by the large abatements which have been made in rents. Upon these points we would refer to the detailed statements in the reports of our Assistant Commissioners. 4480.

Some very striking evidence has been given upon the same subject by witnesses of authority illustrating the extent of the losses sustained by the agricultural classes of the kingdom. It is stated by one witness (Sir J. Caird) that, taking a series of five bad seasons preceding 1861 and occurring at greater intervals than those of the recent depression, viz., 1853, 1855, 1859, 1860, 1861, the average produce of wheat during those five years was 24 bushels, and the average price 61s. 1d. per quarter; while for the five years 1873, 1875, 1876, 1877, and 1879 the average produce was 19 bushels per acre and the average price 49s. 10d. The total deficiency, the witness states, may be taken to be equal to 2½ years' rent of the land at 25s. per acre. 62,647.

The same witness says that in the period from 1867 to 1869 the annual value of the imports into this country of the food which we consume was 79,140,000*l.* In 1877 to 1879, 10 years later, it was 129,632,000*l.*, making an increase of 50,492,000*l.* Assuming the consumption of the population per head to be at the rate of 9*l.* 5s. 6d., and making allowances for the ordinary rate of increase of population, the estimated loss of farmers' capital in six years would amount to 138,828,000*l.* 62,672.

Another witness (Mr. Giffen), who admits that there has been "enormous depression," involving losses equivalent at least to what is usually considered to be the whole of the farmers' profit, yet hardly thinks that there are sufficient means for determining what has been the actual diminution of agricultural capital. He calls attention, however, to the fact that the average importations "in the three years 1867, 1868, and 1869 was 79,000,000*l.*; the annual average in the years 1878, 1879, and 1880 was 133,000,000*l.*; so that the difference amounts to 54,000,000*l.* sterling. "Then I find that the increase of population between 1867-69 and 1878-80 amounts to 3,520,000; and at 12*l.* per head this comes to 42,000,000*l.* sterling." This "would show the approximate deficiency of the home harvest in those three years, taking mere values alone for comparison, to be about 12,000,000*l.* sterling annually." Upon this he observes that it is "quite certain that the matters which the farming interest have had to contend with have been much more serious than would be represented by a sum of 14,000,000*l.* to 18,000,000*l.* sterling." 64,768.
64,774.
64,744.
64,756.

We have received reports from our Assistant Commissioners, Messrs. Read, Pell, and Clay, for America and Canada, which will be found to contain a most valuable mass of evidence upon the condition of agriculture in those countries, and upon the extent to which importation from them is likely to affect the prices of English produce in the future. FOREIGN REPORTS.

We have also received from our Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Jenkins, reports on Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and France. These reports enter very fully and with great completeness of detail into the condition of agriculture and of the agricultural classes in the countries to which they refer.

Mr. Jenkins found that agricultural depression exists in every country under systems of land tenure differing from those which prevail in the United Kingdom.

Denmark, and the dairy districts in other countries, have more or less escaped.

In all these countries the cost of production has increased, and the efficiency of the labourer has diminished: this being less noticeable where labourers have allotments of land.

The law of distress exists in these countries with the exception of Denmark, where the substitute is more oppressive to the tenant farmer, as it consists of payment of rent in advance and the provision of security against losses and dilapidations.

Where the law of distress exists, landowners have been enabled to give their tenants two or 'three years' credit, while proprietor farmers in the same districts, whose property is heavily mortgaged, as is generally the case, have been compelled to sell their cattle and even a portion of their land to satisfy the claims of the mortgagees.

The position of the continental tenant farmer is less favourable than in England, on account of the short leases containing restrictive covenants with the exclusive right to game and absence of compensation for unexhausted improvements. Still, the governments of these countries subsidise to a considerable extent, and in some cases even maintain the institutions for the technical education of farmers and labourers.

Attention has also been directed to the extensive adoption of dairy-farming and cattle breeding upon arable land where artificial grasses form a considerable item in the rotation, as well as to the extensive utilisation of sandy and peat soils as market gardens.

Such, briefly, is the effect of the evidence as to the existence and extent of agricultural depression.

There is no question connected with this Inquiry which it is more important to determine than what are the causes to which this great and wide-spread distress may be attributed.

All the witnesses whom we have examined have agreed in ascribing it mainly to a succession of unfavourable seasons. One witness says: "It is really owing to the absence of sun and the presence of an extra quantity of rain. It is the extra rainfall and the absence of sun that has prevented anything from maturing. Nothing in fact in the last year or two has matured properly." Mr. Squerry says: "I believe the approximate and most intense cause of the depression is the series of unfavourable seasons which we have had during the past four, and in some counties five years, and that the mischief has been intensified to a great extent by the extremely low quality as well as quantity of the produce in England; whilst on the other hand the Americans have had exceptionally large crops and have been able to send us their produce at prices which have, of course, *pro tanto* depreciated ours." Another witness (Mr. Huskinson) gives it as his opinion that the main causes of the distress are the disastrous seasons of the last five years, the excessive rainfall, the absence of sunshine, and the low temperature. "I am quite clear," he observes, "that these are the main causes, and if I might put the causes numerically they would account for 7 out of 10 of the whole: putting the whole depression at 10, the seasons alone would account for seven-tenths of it." To the same effect is the evidence of several other witnesses of authority—owners, agents, and farmers. The Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir J. B. Lawes, Mr. J. Howard, M.P., concur with other witnesses in ascribing the depression to a succession of bad seasons. The Speaker thinks the weather is the main cause. He says, "since 1875, down to 1879, inclusive, we have had a succession of indifferent harvests owing to the weather." "The harvest of 1878 was bad, and 1879 the worst harvest I ever remember, not excepting the very bad harvest of 1848." The Speaker further says:—"I have stated more than once in my evidence that I thought the present agricultural depression was due mainly to the weather. I can bring that statement to the test of figures. In 1879 I started a register for the registration of sunshine, and it may interest this Commission to know what the result of that experiment has been. I put myself in communication with the Astronomer Royal who had at Greenwich established a Sun register, and with his assistance I set up an instrument of the kind, and I have day by day registered the amount of sunshine since the beginning of 1879 down to the present day. I undertook this as a farmer, because I thought that the relative amount of sunshine from year to year would prove a very fair indication of the prospects of harvest. I find that in 1879 there were in the whole year 1,098 hours of sunshine; in the year 1880 there were 1,422 hours of sunshine; that is an increase approaching 50 per cent. I can of course only compare the sunshine of the present year during the first seven months of 1879 and 1880; and I find that for those seven months there were 621 hours of sunshine in 1879; for the same seven months in 1880 there were 876 hours of sunshine, and for the same seven months of 1881 there were 973 hours of sunshine, so that we have had this year no less than 50 per cent. more sunshine than we had in the same months of 1879. I thought that those figures would show the extraordinary difference between the two years. The paper that I have before me also gives the rainfall, but that is not a matter of so much interest."

RETURNS showing amount of Rainfall and Sunshine at Glynde, Sussex, for the Years 1879-1880, and for the first seven months of 1881.

	Rainfall (in inches).			Sunshine (in Hours)			Days on which rain fell.			Amount of Sunshine for the first seven months in each year.		
	1879.	1880.	1881.	1879.	1880.	1881.	1879.	1880.	1881.	1879.	1880.	1881.
January	5.21	0.46	0.44	11.5	80.4	55.9	9	8	5			
February	4.93	2.56	0.77	50.3	45.9	33.8	19	14	13			
March	0.56	1.99	2.98	98.5	150.6	125.7	12	8	13			
April	3.56	2.10	0.55	100.6	138.3	114.9	15	14	8			
May	2.98	0.51	0.98	121.8	179.1	188.7	17	2	8			
June	3.58	1.62	2.67	149.9	180.2	204.0	17	10	9			
July	3.64	2.25	1.81	99.0	122.4	227.1	17	16	9	521.5	375.0	373.2
August	5.43	0.90		122.0	155.3		19	8				
September	4.89	2.76		115.5	129.7		18	11				
October	0.89	5.10		84.4	43.4		9	16				
November	1.54	2.95		43.5	68.6		4	14				
December	1.56	2.83		50.5	39.5		5	16				
—	35.05	29.43		1,086.3	1,422.9		*196	*72	*69			

* Days on which rain fell the first seven months in each year.

Other witnesses concur in regarding as the chief causes of depression, the deficient yield of corn, the poor quality, the low prices of both it and wool, the losses in live stock by contagious and other diseases, and the ungenial seasons, which have rendered the keeping of stock most expensive and the profit *nil*.

Mr. Proud has no doubt that the greater proportion of the present distress is attributable to the weather. To the same general effect is the whole of the evidence which we have received, one witness ascribing fully nine-tenths of the loss to unfavourable weather.

60,056.

Sir J. Caird ascribes the depression " firstly, to a succession of bad seasons, unprecedented in its closeness and long continuance; secondly, to the lower range of prices, partly due to foreign imports and partly to the inferiority of quality of the home production; and thirdly, no doubt, to the rise of rent since 1867."

62,641.

Next to unfavourable seasons as a cause of agricultural depression, foreign competition is alleged to have produced the most injurious effect.

Foreign Competition.

The evidence upon this subject tends partly to illustrate the effect of foreign importations upon the prices of farming produce during the last few years, and partly to furnish data for estimating its probable effect upon English agriculture for the future.

Although it may not be possible either to estimate with accuracy the full effect of foreign competition or to anticipate the extent of its future development, yet it does not admit of question that the unprecedentedly large importations, chiefly from America, have, by lowering the prices of home produce, greatly increased agricultural depression. Nor does there appear to be room for doubt that English farmers must lay their account to a continuance of this competition, pursued with unabated energy and with yearly increasing enterprise.

If it had not been for the enormous competition from America, prices in bad seasons would necessarily have gone up, and English produce would have thus found compensation for deficient yield.

6569.

" English farmers have not had the prices which they had in other years when they " had bad seasons," &c., &c.

33,158.

33,463. "Foreign competition will limit the profits of farming to a considerable extent," &c., &c.

34,482. "Times have been, when there was a very bad crop of wheat, that prices have risen, but they did not in 1879, nor in 1878 which was a moderate year. The price of wheat has been low, good crops or bad crops, and the only chance for a farmer to pay his way is to have good crops," &c., &c.

34,822. "We have had such an immense importation from America that our corn was neglected. In fact, in the year 1878, if you showed a sample of wheat, very often the millers or dealers would say, 'It is not good enough,' and would buy foreign corn instead. That happened with me several times. That was a thing which we never knew before."

38,344. Although it is suggested that, notwithstanding foreign competition, British farmers will be able to hold their own, and that the alarm at the competition "has subsided in a great measure lately," yet the preponderance of opinion is in accordance with the view that foreign competition must be reckoned upon in the future, as permanently affecting the prices of British agricultural produce. How far it may do so can only be matter of speculation, upon which opinion appears to be a good deal divided. To what extent corn, meat, wool, and dairy produce may continue to be imported must obviously be a matter of great uncertainty.

Although a succession of bad seasons, together with foreign competition, have been referred to as the chief causes of agricultural depression, others have been assigned as tending to aggravate it. Prominent amongst these are the increased cost of production and the heavy losses of live stock.

LAND LAWS. The "Land Laws" have also been referred to by various witnesses as aggravating the depression.

It is alleged that a more liberal system both of ownership and tenure would place agriculture in a better position to withstand the difficulties to which it is exposed from vicissitudes of season, large and growing importations, periodical depression of the home trade, and recurrence of disturbance in the labour market.

On the other hand, it is confidently maintained by several witnesses that the English land laws cannot have produced or aggravated the agricultural depression of the last few years. In support of this opinion we may draw attention to the Report of our Assistant Commissioner for Belgium, France, and Holland, which shows that agricultural depression, under different systems of land tenure, has also existed in those countries.

Owners in fee, it is stated, have suffered equally with life tenants. Farmers who are free from restrictive covenants, as well as those who are bound by what are regarded as injurious covenants, have suffered alike.

COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS. In connexion with this view, frequent reference has been made to the effect of the Agricultural Holdings Act, and the expediency has been generally suggested of making compulsory the clauses of that Act which relate to compensation in all cases where compensation is not absolutely secured by custom or by agreement.

The weight of evidence is strongly in favour of securing to the tenant fair compensation for so much of his unexhausted capital as may be left in the land, so far as it is beneficial to the landlord or incoming tenant. Although a statutory right to such compensation was not secured by the Agricultural Holdings Act, yet that enactment has, notwithstanding its permissive character, done much good. It reversed the presumption of law in relation to improvements effected by the tenant, and prescribed the amount of compensation and the mode in which it should be given.

Upon many estates fresh agreements have been entered into in accordance with the spirit of the Act, and adapted to local peculiarities and customs.

FREEDOM OF CROPPING. Upon the important subject of freedom of cropping and sale of produce we have examined several witnesses.

38,738. Mr. J. Howard, M.P., is "in principle in favour of complete freedom of cropping and sale of produce." He wishes to see "perfect freedom of cultivation." He would establish freedom, but if a man abused that freedom he would make him amenable to an

impartial tribunal, and give the landowner the readiest and cheapest method of bringing any such tenant to book, and making him pay. "Cast-iron rules as to what a tenant should do and what he should not do, what he should grow and what he should not grow, and what he should sell and what he should not sell, is about as bad an arrangement as possible." An Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Druce, summed up the opinions that he had heard generally expressed in his district by saying that "it would not be quite fair that a man should be perfectly unrestricted as to his mode of cropping; but that he should be unrestricted, if he held under a lease, for all the early part of the lease; and that if he held under an agreement he should, so far as he could, bring the land back into a prescribed system after the notice to quit was given." Another witness (Mr. Clutton) is of opinion that there should be "fair freedom," but that "there must be some covenants, because we never know, although we grant leases, at what period they will determine."

In the management of the Duchy of Lancaster and of the Greenwich Hospital estates there is, in the case of the former, "a covenant to cultivate in a good and husbandlike manner, to the satisfaction of the surveyor of the duchy," who "must be taken to act reasonably in his expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction." Though it is necessary to have covenants in the lease, they would not be enforced against good tenants.

On the estate of Greenwich Hospital, practically, "if a man is a good farmer he is not very much interfered with." To the same effect is the evidence of several agents of large estates. "Restrictive covenants as to cultivation have not contributed to the present depression." Another witness would give the tenant the utmost freedom compatible with the maintenance of the fertility of the estate. Although restrictions are necessary with bad tenants and are not so necessary with good ones, "you cannot make a selection." "The good and the bad, other things being equal, should be put under similar restrictions, which would not be of any injury to the tenants. They are absolutely necessary in all cases. You may have an excellent tenant to-day, and he may die, and you may get into the hands of his executors and people you have nothing to do with, and who may impoverish the farm in the course of a year." He would uphold restrictions "as necessary for the protection of the landlord."

Another witness is very particular about breaking up pasture and cutting down timber, but "with regard to cultivation, I give the greatest amount of latitude and simply stipulate that it is to be done according to the best manner followed in the district, so as to keep the land in good heart and condition and without any stipulation as to the four or five courses." He would "give the good tenant any amount of liberty. He could take two white crops and sell off hay and straw, and you need never interfere with him." It is his interest to farm his land in the manner which will give him the best results; that is for the interest both of landlord and tenant.

Another witness thinks that "the farmers are too much hampered by restrictions at the present time." He thinks that "perfect freedom of cropping and modified freedom of disposal of produce, should be granted while the tenant is under six months notice to quit." Although he thinks it is very necessary, to meet the present times, that freedom of cultivation should be given to the tenant farmer, he is not prepared to suggest how that could be done by clauses in an Act of Parliament. He "leaves that to wiser heads." "In isolated cases we cannot do it." Another witness, when asked "if he can suggest any remedies for the present depression; is there anything to be gained by giving greater freedom of cultivation?" replies, "Not in the least. It is a thing I do not believe in. I farm 600 acres of my own, and I have no one to dictate to me, and I cannot, with this freedom of cultivation, improve matters." On four farms near Stamford, the tenants had the privilege of selling straw and taking manure back. Of those farmers who sold the straw, "three of them I never heard of bringing manure back, and they all became bankrupt and the fourth man was very shaky." Another witness, has given his attention to restrictive covenants in leases, and believes "thoroughly in the necessity for each landlord and each tenant to make his own bargains. There is no power,—no legislative power,—that can be called into action, I think, that can operate beneficially any way; because each farm stands upon its own footing and each landlord may have his own views upon the way in which his farm should and should not be farmed, and the tenants have also their diverse views and those views can only be

5170. "reconciled by the parties settling between themselves and for themselves on what terms the land shall be held and how it shall be managed." Another witness has given freedom of action during the last 20 years in all the estates that he has had to do with. He is of opinion that such freedom is beneficial to landlord and tenant, both interests being identical, "the farm being given up so as to involve no sacrifice on the landlord's part in getting another tenant."

5171. Another witness, a land agent in the West Riding, says that farmers near towns have liberty to sell. Although by his agreement a man is subject to the four-course system of cultivation, "if he is a good tenant, it is never enforced. He is allowed to cultivate pretty well as he likes, excepting when it is near the end of the term, when it must be seen that the land ought to be in due course of management." As a rule, whatever the clauses of the agreement may say to the contrary, he never interferes with him. "I always say there are only two conditions on which farming can be carried on properly, viz., that so long as the land is clean and a man grows good crops, he cannot injure the land."

- LAW OF DISTRESS.
The evidence which we have received upon the effect of the law of distress is conflicting, some witnesses being in favour of retaining, some of modifying, and others of totally abolishing it. One witness is surprised that the law of distress "should be put forward as being against the farmer's interest, as it seems to him to be most distinctly in his favour." By giving the landlord a preferential claim the tenant obtains the advantage of indulgence in the payment of his rent. If the landlord were deprived of that security, he would protect himself in some other way. "The comparison drawn of the disadvantage to the trader as regards the landlord is not at all a just one, for the trader has the option of trusting the farmer or not; the landlord has not any option." "In difficult times farmers have been materially helped by the rent being allowed to be a year, sometimes more, in arrear." 4497. Another witness thinks that, "from the tenant's point of view," the abolition would be a bad thing, "because they would have to pay the rent immediately it was due." 7224. The abolition would be "a bad thing for the tenant." This view is supported by other witnesses, including our Assistant Commissioners, Messrs. Coleman, Doyle, Drace, Little and Jenkins, who consider that the total abolition of the law of distress would be detrimental to the interests of the farmers.

- 34,329. Upon the other hand, several witnesses strongly advocate the total abolition of the law. One witness thinks it would benefit the better class of farmers considerably if the law were totally abolished. In order to protect the landlords, the tenant should be compelled to pay his rent in advance; he would advocate the system which in Scotland is called "fore-renting." Another witness sees no advantage to the tenant from the law of distress, and is strongly in favour of its total abolition.

The preponderance of opinion brought before us, however, is against the total abolition, but in favour of a modification of this law. Many witnesses recommend the reduction of the term to one or two years.

- LOCAL TAXATION.
Amongst the causes which have tended to aggravate the existing agricultural depression, a prominent place is assigned by witnesses to the pressure of local taxation. Although, looking to the increase of population, the amount of poor's rates does not appear to be excessive, yet the imposition of new rates, viz., the education rate and the sanitary rate, and the increase of old rates, especially the highway rate, in consequence of the abolition of turnpikes, press very heavily upon the agricultural interest. This complaint is general, and, with regard to certain charges, is fully borne out by figures.

- 55,033. Sir John Lambert, Secretary to the Local Government Board, states:—"I can point out the increases or decreases which have taken place in the various rates between the year 1870-71, when the returns were first collected by the Local Government Board, and the last financial year for which the returns have been made up, namely, for the year 1879-80. To begin with the poor rate, I find that in the year 1870-71 the amount raised was 8,168,848*l.*, and in the year 1879-80 it was 7,846,021*l.*, being a diminution of 322,827*l.* In the case of the county rate the amount levied in the year 1870-71 was 1,052,839*l.*, and in 1879-80 it was 1,108,965*l.*, being an increase of 56,126*l.* The rural police rates were 572,357*l.* in 1870-71, and in 1879-80 they amounted to 558,846*l.*, there being a diminution of 14,111*l.* The borough rate in 1870-71 was 1,016,917*l.*, and in 1879-80 it was

"1,242,518*l.*, being an increase of 225,001*l.* The highway rate in 1870-71 was 1,346,900*l.*, and in 1879-80 it had gone up to 1,778,828*l.*, being an increase of 432,028*l.* Then there are various metropolitan rates. I do not know whether I need go into the particulars of those, but I will do so if your Grace wishes it. I now come to urban sanitary rates, which in 1870-71 were 2,598,250*l.*, whilst in 1879-80 they were 8,347,035*l.* There was no rural sanitary rate, or a very small amount indeed, collected by the nuisance authorities in 1870-71, of which I have no return because that was paid out of the poor rate, but in 1879-80 the rural sanitary rate was 199,939*l.* The lighting and watching rate was 41,747*l.* in 1870-71, and it was 36,190*l.* in 1879-80. The sewers rate was 43,889*l.* in 1870-71, and in 1880 it was 52,932*l.* The drainage and embankment rate in 1870-71 was 161,978*l.*, and in 1880 it was 205,628*l.* The burial board rate was 89,553*l.* in 1870-71, and it was 123,754*l.* in 1879-80. The school board rate was non-existent in 1870-71, but the school board rate in 1879-80 was 1,484,312*l.* The church rate was 23,186*l.* in 1870-71, and it had gone down to 13,507*l.* in 1879-80. The total of all these rates in 1870-71 was 17,405,711*l.*, and in 1879-80 the total was 25,926,949*l.*, being an increase of 8,521,238*l.* It may be useful to say that I have classified these rates under three or four heads, and I give the totals under each head. First of all I will take mixed rates, that is to say, rates paid by town and country, poor rate, burial board rate, school board rate, and church rate, and the total of those rates is 9,467,594*l.* Then the rates chiefly urban, the borough rate and the urban sanitary rate, amount to 9,589,553*l.* The amount of rates in the metropolis is 2,928,468*l.*, making for rates chiefly urban 12,518,021*l.* Then the rates chiefly rural, the county rate, the rural police rate, the highway rate, the rural sanitary rate, and the lighting and watching rate, amount to a total of 3,682,768*l.*; and if you add to these the sewers rate and the drainage and embankment rate, amounting together to 268,560*l.*, you get a total for rates chiefly rural of 3,941,328*l.*; but as regards drainage and embankment rates and the sewers rate, they are limited to special localities, and they are not rates which are generally collected."

Results of a similar character are shown by returns from other counties. In one parish in Shropshire there has been a progressive increase in the highway rate from 160*l.* in 1863 to 711*l.* in 1879. Upon one small property in Staffordshire the increase in rates, other than poor's rates, amounts to 3*s.* 6*d.* in the pound on the rateable value, or 7*s.* on the income.

Mr. Doyle's memorandum on local taxation.

In the parish of Didmorton, in the Tetbury Union, Gloucestershire, the average amount of rates paid for five years ending March 31, 1858, was 26*l.* 6*s.* 3*d.*; for the five years ending 31st of March 1878 it was 118*l.* 11*s.* 7*d.*

In the Northleach Union, taking decennial periods from 1850, the total rates appear to have been—

	£
1850-51	5,471
1860-61	5,594
1870-71	8,525
1878-79	10,069

A very interesting parochial return from the highway board of the Cirencester Union exhibits the comparative average cost of highways for the years 1860-61, previously to the formation of the highway district board, and the average cost for the two years ending March 31st, 1879. In 27 parishes out of 32 there has been an increase, the total average cost for the first period being 1,100*l.*, and for the latter period 3,710*l.*, showing an increase of 2,600*l.*

The increase complained of arises chiefly in the disturnpiked roads, in the highway rate, sanitary rate, and school rate. These increases, however, have not been uniform in their incidence, and have affected some localities more than others.

It has been suggested by several witnesses that all new rates imposed during the currency of a lease should be borne by the landlord, and that in all other cases the rates should be borne equally by landlord and tenant. To these and other suggestions connected with local taxation we refer in a subsequent part of this Report.

A very general complaint is made by witnesses of the way in which the tithe rentcharge is calculated. The grounds of objection are thus briefly put by one witness:—"The big measures have never been reduced to standard imperial measures fixed at a given weight. A very small number of towns have been selected from which to get the prices for the corn returns in order to arrive at the average. The

TITHE RENT-CHARGE.

33,419.

"large quantity of seconds and tail corn has never been taken into consideration in the calculation. The merchants' profits have often been added to the prices that the growers receive, as the basis upon which to make the return.

33,410.

"These causes together have operated to create a higher average for the tithe than should fairly be the case."

9620.

9458.

33,834-6.

43,441.

55,501.

10093.

These complaints are repeated in substance and illustrated by several witnesses: We would refer especially to the evidence and report of our Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Little. The objection to the present system of taking the averages is thus illustrated in the evidence:—"The result has been to increase materially the total value of the tithe rentcharge as at present levied. But I wish also to make another complaint with reference to these returns, that the market returns upon which the general averages are based are not collected with sufficient accuracy, and that the totals on which the averages are based have fallen off, especially in the case of oats, in a manner that cannot be explained otherwise than by great remissness on the part of the officials collecting those returns."

61,678.

The evidence of many witnesses is in accordance with the following suggestion—"Have no more valuations at all. Let the tithe be 100*l.*, and let it be paid by the landlord."

RAILWAY RATES.

Upon the subject of railway rates, we have to report that, although the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1854, provides "that no railway or canal company shall make or give any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to or in favour of any particular person or company, or any particular description of traffic, in any respect whatsoever, or shall subject any particular person or company or any particular description of traffic to any undue or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage in any respect whatsoever," yet evidence has been given by several witnesses in support of complaints both of unequal mileage charges and of preferential rates in favour of foreign produce. It is stated that goods can be carried from America to London, *via* Liverpool, at a cheaper rate than from Liverpool to London. Special instances of the charges referred to are to be found in the evidence.

6,772-3.

8173. 8628.

For timber it is alleged that preferential rates give very unfair advantages to the foreigner, as, for example, the rates for Norwegian and Swedish timber as compared with the English timber from the eastern counties. "From Hunstanton to Nuneston, the distance of miles being 117, the rate for English timber is 25*s.*, and the rate for foreign timber 15*s.* 10*d.* From Hunstanton to Tamworth, 130 miles, the same rate of 25*s.* for English timber, and 18*s.* 4*d.* for foreign timber. The rate from Wisbech, which is a large timber port, to Nuneston (83 miles) for English timber is 23*s.* per ton, and for foreign timber 12*s.* 6*d.* From Wisbech to Tamworth (96 miles) the English timber is 20*s.*, and the foreign timber 14*s.* 2*d.*"

7820.

In the rates for home-grown grain going to Leeds from Wakefield and Doncaster, and for foreign grain going to Leeds from Grimsby, there is a difference in favour of foreign corn of 5*s.* per ton, the rates being 11*s.* and 6*s.* respectively. English wheat put on the railway at stations within six miles of Hull, though nearer to Leeds and Wakefield, would pay more than foreign corn from Hull to Leeds or Wakefield. Upon the other hand, it is alleged by the railway companies that, as American produce is consigned in large quantities from one consignor, it can be conveyed much more economically than if picked up at different stations and in small quantities. It is urged that, in order to enable railways to compete with water carriage, preferential, or very low rates, are necessary. If railways did not carry at a low rate from Hull and Glasgow to London, ships, instead of unloading at these ports, would go direct to London. On the London and North-Western line, on which it is alleged that "there is no difference in the carriage of English grain and foreign grain," and on which the rates are fixed between two places, "and, whether the traffic is going in one direction or the other, the rate is precisely the same," a witness (Mr. Findlay) states—"We carry Manchester packs to Liverpool at 10*s.* 6*d.* or 11*s.*, and we carry them to London, which is five or six times the distance, for 25*s.*, and we pay the dock dues into the bargain. But the fact is, if we do not carry at this rate the goods sent out to India, China, and Japan, there would be no trade in that class of goods through the port of London, and it would all go to Liverpool." A somewhat similar mode of reasoning is adopted to explain the fact that American meat is conveyed for 25*s.* per ton from Liverpool to London, while the charge from Dublin to London is 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, "that is 2*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.* more for the carriage of meat from Dublin to Liverpool." It is admitted that, "as a matter of fact, that company (the London

8296-98.

8290.

8391.

8395.

8397.

8640.

"and North-Western) charge for 333 miles (the distance from Dublin to London) 66s. 8d. as against 25s. for 200 miles from Liverpool to London." The inequality of the charges for the conveyance of home as compared with foreign produce is further very forcibly illustrated by other witnesses by such examples as that "foreign wheat from Hartlepool to Leeds is charged 1s. 5d. per quarter, while wheat from Bedale to Leeds, which is short of half the distance, is charged 2s. per quarter." Again, "from Thirsk to Leeds, about 40 miles, the charge for English oats is 9s. 4d. per ton, whilst from Newcastle to Leeds, about 100 miles, the charge on foreign oats is 9s. 2d." The same witness states, "I had some seed corn from Oxfordshire this year (to Yorkshire) for which they charged me 10s. 1d. per quarter for carriage. I think they bring it from Chicago to Liverpool for a little more than half that price." "Living only 30 miles from London," (another witness states), "I am debarred from sending my goods to London by the rates that are charged. Some people who live considerably further off can get them sent for less."

The practice in Scotland, and the effect of it, is thus described by Mr. Barclay, M.P.:—"There is no doubt that farmers in this country suffer considerably from the excessive and, in many cases, illegal rates which are charged by railway companies for the conveyance of their produce, as well as from the preferential rates which they give to foreign agricultural produce."

Another witness informs us that "Canadian cattle from Glasgow to London cost 5s. a-piece less than home cattle from Glasgow to London, and correspondingly less from every port such as Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle, to inland markets. The same favour is shown to cattle from Sweden and Denmark." The railways "will carry American meat from Glasgow to London at 25s. per ton less than for home beef, and the same from Liverpool to London. This applies both to beef from America and American cattle slaughtered here."

It would be easy to accumulate from our Report a great deal of additional evidence in support of the complaints of unequal mileage rates as well as of preferential rates to foreign over home produce.

The remedy which is suggested for this state of things is that there should be "one rate for all people, and no preference given to any one; let every one work at the same rate. Let the rates for each railway company be published, and no preference given to one sender over another."

We have examined several witnesses who have had experience of the working of the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act, and without exception they bear the strongest testimony to the benefit which it has conferred upon agriculturists. The only objections which witnesses have suggested to us are that it does not go far enough, and that its provisions in many cases are not sufficiently enforced by local authorities. The trade from infected countries should, in the opinion of some, be converted into a dead meat trade; such further restrictions would, in the opinion of one witness, "be very slightly injurious, if at all, to the consumer of meat, because the dead meat forms such a very large proportion of the total supply. While the value of live cattle imported has increased only 33 per cent., the value of the dead meat imported has increased 271 per cent." In other respects the Act is most highly approved of. "It has been very successful," and "has worked very well." The Act has prevented the spread of contagious diseases amongst cattle. Although the restrictions imposed by the Act are "exceedingly inconvenient," farmers are satisfied to submit to them "if they can stave off the disease." From every part of the United Kingdom the evidence of practical men is to the same effect. The Act has been most valuable to farmers; but "should be rendered more restrictive." "Farmers are very grateful for the Act." The fear of disease had done away with breeding to a very large extent in England; the effect of the Act is again to encourage it, but this beneficial effect has been to a certain extent checked by the constant fear of the re-introduction of disease from abroad.

Some evidence has been given upon the subject of the appointment of a minister of agriculture. It is urged that interests so important as are those of agriculture should in this country, as in other countries of Europe, as well as in America, have the advantage of the supervision and administrative assistance of a special department of the Government.

The magnitude of that interest may be illustrated by Statistics from the Agricultural Returns for the Years 1874, 1880 and 1881, issued by the Board of Trade.

	In ENGLAND.			In WALES.		
TOTAL SUPERFICIAL AREA OF LAND, of all descriptions and of Water - - -	Acres. 32,197,983			Acres. 4,791,895		
	1874	1880	1881.	1875.	1880.	1881.
TOTAL ACREAGE under all kinds of Crops, Bare Fallow, and Grass, as returned to the Board of Trade - - - - -	—	34,594,265	34,663,937	—	3,767,516	3,786,943
Corn Crops: Wheat - - - - -	3,391,440	2,745,733	2,641,045	117,869	69,798	90,026
Barley or Bere - - - - -	1,850,732	3,666,837	3,029,499	105,485	149,514	149,516
Oats - - - - -	1,356,738	1,380,325	1,637,064	232,031	269,526	243,544
Rye - - - - -	65,645	51,685	32,373	1,347	1,765	1,995
Beans - - - - -	226,561	494,071	417,791	2,704	3,619	2,535
Pesa - - - - -	303,066	331,350	313,549	4,728	1,568	1,864
TOTAL ACREAGE OF CORN CROPS - -	5,908,072	6,969,699	6,999,255	516,081	476,116	482,315
Permanent Pasture or Grass not under rotation (exclusive of Heath or Mountain Land) -	10,426,149	11,461,856	11,635,825	1,665,642	1,805,750	1,815,413
Acres returned as under:						
Orchards or Fruit Trees of any kind -	—	175,300	180,935	—	2,354	2,995
Market Gardens - - - - -	—	60,380	41,396	—	566	632
Nursery Gardens - - - - -	—	9,261	10,100	—	516	335
NUMBER OF LIVE STOCK ON 4th JAN. 1880 AND 1878	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Horses used solely for agriculture - - -	—	766,587	773,867	—	75,668	72,506
Mares kept only for breeding, and unbroken horses - - - - -	—	325,748	329,016	—	62,556	65,559
TOTAL NUMBER OF HORSES - - -	1,067,288	1,098,973	1,094,185	183,323	138,224	137,767
Cattle						
Cows and Heifers in Milk or in Calf -	—	1,333,137	1,621,249	—	261,256	269,690
Other Cattle, 2 years old and above -	—	1,675,871	1,788,169	—	125,666	132,753
Other Cattle, under 2 years old - - -	—	1,468,016	1,435,447	—	307,670	289,112
TOTAL NUMBER OF CATTLE - - -	4,865,540	4,155,045	4,166,065	668,192	694,714	691,545
Sheep: 1 year old and above - - - -	—	16,623,793	9,618,602	—	1,935,112	1,771,533
“ under 1 year old - - - - -	—	6,136,662	5,564,004	—	623,269	695,782
TOTAL NUMBER OF SHEEP - - -	16,623,793	16,629,645	15,382,606	3,964,620	2,718,316	2,466,945
Pigs - - - - -	2,456,793	1,927,914	1,735,280	563,734	183,663	161,799

In SCOTLAND.			Total in GREAT BRITAIN.			
Area. 19,496,155			Acres. 55,515,354			{ TOTAL SUPERFICIAL AREA OF LAND, of all descriptions and of Water.
1876.	1880.	1881.	1876.	1880.	1881.	
—	4,716,157	4,708,512	—	32,101,969	32,211,512	{ TOTAL ACREAGE UNDER all kinds of Crops, Bars, Pasture, and Grass, as returned to the Board of Trade.
158,840	71,976	74,758	8,856,568	2,902,485	2,905,249	Corn Crops. Wheat.
245,848	864,138	976,517	2,267,937	8,467,441	8,448,304	Barley or Bere
1,064,664	1,037,264	1,080,737	5,896,264	2,796,563	2,961,573	Oats.
2,615	7,558	7,298	47,258	46,781	41,567	Rye.
26,738	16,977	16,554	538,044	458,667	448,801	Beans.
1,828	1,357	1,567	318,847	324,479	316,788	Pees.
1,410,413	1,464,867	1,494,768	9,430,496	6,875,762	6,847,976	TOTAL ACREAGE OF CORN CROPS.
1,306,322	1,159,335	1,172,159	13,175,012	16,425,955	16,545,367	POTENTIAL PASTURE OF GRASS AND UNDER PASTURE (exclusive of Heath or Mountain Land)
—	1,968	1,538	—	179,595	154,955	Acreage returned as under:
—	2,905	2,955	—	64,430	65,404	Orchards or Fruit Trees of any kind.
—	1,738	1,825	—	11,947	12,369	Market Gardens.
—	—	—	—	—	—	Nursery Gardens.
No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	NUMBER OF LIVE STOCK ON 4th JUNE 1880 AND 1881.
—	142,322	142,623	—	986,464	986,954	Horses used solely for agriculture.
—	52,682	52,488	—	446,718	438,014	Horses kept only for breeding, and unbroken horses.
190,518	194,912	195,111	1,513,738	1,433,182	1,424,968	TOTAL NUMBER OF HORSES.
—	347,196	352,388	—	2,241,788	2,370,558	Cattle.
—	255,967	269,567	—	1,460,736	1,564,769	Cows and Heifers in Milk or in Calf.
—	455,124	482,108	—	2,202,612	2,135,065	Other Cattle, 2 years old and above.
1,154,846	1,092,286	1,096,315	6,120,697	5,913,046	5,911,645	Other Cattle, under 2 years old.
—	—	—	—	—	—	TOTAL NUMBER OF CATTLE.
—	4,851,116	4,532,086	—	17,186,011	16,146,153	Sheep: 1 year old and above.
—	2,430,972	2,175,192	—	9,435,029	8,637,962	“ under 1 year old.
7,589,637	7,072,088	6,731,252	25,215,943	26,621,040	24,784,115	TOTAL NUMBER OF SHEEP.
120,297	120,925	122,618	2,452,232	2,008,542	2,048,580	Pigs.

LABOURERS.

Upon the condition of labourers and the state of labour as it affects agriculture throughout the country, a great deal of evidence has been submitted to us to the following effect:—"The labourer was never in a better position than he is now," 4791.
 "Wages have gone down very little indeed. The labourers are far better off than 4976.
 "they were years ago. They have better cottages, and they get higher wages and 5463.
 "less hard work." During the recent depression "the labourer has had the best time 33,211.
 "of it, and no mistake about it. We have reduced him about 3d. a day; we were 33,518.
 "giving 2s. 6d., and we are now giving 2s. 3d." "It is undoubtedly the case that the
 "social condition of the labourer has improved, and that he is better educated."

Speaking of labourers in the western counties, our Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Little, observes that the condition is said to be considerably improved. He is convinced that there has been a great deal of exaggeration and misrepresentation of facts in respect to their condition. On many estates the labourers are well housed, and the wages, when all allowances are taken into account, are considerably more than is generally believed. The Dorsetshire labourers have very large allowances of fuel and garden and potato ground. Mr. Joseph Arch, without pretending to fix the amount of wages that a labourer ought to receive, thinks that, owing to piece work not being generally adopted, he is not able to earn as much as he might if working by piece work. He thinks that in a very considerable portion of England the labourers are not well housed; that their allotments are too small and too highly rented. Referring to the migration of labourers to towns, he thinks that "the class of young 58,463-4.
 59,246.
 "men who have been left behind are a class of men who have no sort of enterprise
 "about them. The most enterprising, persevering, and intelligent young men would
 "not stop to grind for 6s. a week." Another witness, referring to the "three profits" 58,727.
 spoken of by the late Lord Beaconsfield, states that "the labourer has had the chief
 "profit; that is to say, he has had a larger proportional share of the profit than
 "formerly. Labourers are unquestionably better off, and I am very glad of it."

Mr. Shaw Lefevre does "not think that the labourers have suffered at all during 64,134.
 "the last six years as compared with the other classes. On the contrary, the very low
 "prices of wheat and cheese, and other things which they consume, have been of
 "enormous benefit to agricultural labourers."

Notwithstanding this general improvement in the condition of the labourer, there would appear to be considerable deterioration in the quality of the labour, and less disposition on the part of the labourer to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage. "The work that you get from farm labourers is not as good as it used to be, either in 6986.
 "quality or quantity. In fact, the cost of labour has risen on all farms from that 33,519.
 "cause." "We have not found that the quality of the work done has increased with
 "the improvement of the agricultural labourer's condition. But there is a disposition
 "towards improvement in his work, and in the interest he takes in his employment
 "the last year or two, that was not observable five or six years ago." "It now takes
 "five men to do what four men did 25 years ago, or at any time you like more than 34,512-13.
 "20 years ago. There is not the same sympathy; there is not the same inclination
 "on the part of the labourer to do anything that he is not obliged to do for his
 "employer." "I do not think the labourers do the same amount of work that they 35,410.
 "used to do formerly." The Speaker of the House of Commons is "inclined to agree 58,237.
 "with many farmers who have stated to me that not only is the cost of labour higher,
 "but the quality is not so good." Another witness states, "We require three to do 50,978.
 "two's work. The labourers' unions, or the delegates who represent them, have not 51,836.
 "only succeeded in disturbing, but have to a great extent destroyed, the good feeling
 "which once existed."

In Devonshire the cost of labour has increased by one-third, but "the quality and 52,995.
 "quantity have decreased. There is no doubt whatever about that. I have known
 "something about farming for 30 years, and I consider that labour is not at all what
 "it was, nothing like."

To the same effect is a vast amount of evidence which we have received from different parts of the country, cases in illustration being cited by several of the witnesses.

EDUCATION
ACT.

The effect of the Education Act has been referred to by several employers of labour as seriously interfering with farm work. "It has had a very injurious effect so far as 64,134.
 "the farmers are concerned. It may have benefited the labourers themselves, but it

"has taken the best labourers off the farm. In the first place, we get no boys now, and we are obliged to employ men to do the work that boys used to do." "The Education Act has increased the difficulties we have with labour."

54,060.
34,523.

Another alleged effect of the Education Act is that "not only has it taken children from agricultural employment, but it obliges the women to remain at home on account, perhaps, of an elder daughter of 13 or 14 being compelled to go to school, instead of staying at home to look after the younger children."

47,822.

"The education rate has fallen heavily upon us in certain instances, where we are now unable to get boys of 12 or 13 years of age to do the work for which we have at present to employ men. This last winter, I may state that I have had three men employed doing work that used to be done by boys. I could only get one boy; there was not another in the village who had passed the proper standard or who was of an age to be employed. The others were either away or at school. It has had a great effect, especially in small villages, in depriving the farmers of female labour, which at one time was a great element of cheap labour. The women are now obliged to stay at home to attend to the younger children, which was done by girls of 12 or 13 previously, and they cannot get out to work." "I have to take a man at 12s. per week to single beet which I could get a boy to do well at 3s. 6d., and it would hurt his back less."

35,315.

52,830.

The preceding references represent, with some qualification, the views of employers of labour as to the effect of the Education Act directly and indirectly upon the actual cost and the future supply of agricultural labour.

Several witnesses have also urged the desirability of facilitating the acquisition of technical knowledge, and of giving a practical agricultural education to the sons of farmers and persons of that class.

AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION.
EST. 1845.
57,790. 0. 11 1/2.
PAID 25,340. 18. 1.
CL. 1850. 5. 11 1/2.
CL. 1855. 5. 11 1/2.
CL. 1860. 5. 11 1/2.
CL. 1865. 5. 11 1/2.

IRELAND.

Since the date of our Preliminary Report the condition of agriculture and of the agricultural classes in Ireland has been dealt with by legislation. We do not therefore propose to consider further the several subjects upon which we have examined witnesses in connexion with that branch of our inquiry.

To the evidence, however, upon one subject, connected with an important branch of Irish industry, and directly affecting a large class of agriculturists, we deem it advisable to call attention.

CORK
BUTTER
MARKET.

The way in which trade may be hampered and its progress obstructed by the abuse of arrangements originally designed for its promotion is strikingly illustrated by the history of the Cork Butter Market, which will be found in the evidence submitted to Your Majesty.

50,532-
32,031;

Whatever the value of the Cork Butter Market in former times to the farmers may have been, it has now ceased to be an institution that can be favourably spoken of. Owing to the greater facilities for the transit of produce there is a much larger demand for fresh butter than formerly, and a corresponding diminution in the value of very salt butter.

The present arrangements of the Cork Butter Market evidently tend to reduce the value of the highest class of butter, and to unduly raise that of a lower class, so as to produce an approximate uniformity in price, which is not good either for the farmer or for the consumer.

The Cork Butter Market is in no real sense an open market; on the contrary, the control of the Corporation of Cork over it is illusory, and the management is in the hands of a close Corporation, who discourage individual enterprise, and, through the system of advances to farmers, keep them in a state of subjection injurious to their interests as agriculturists.

Such is the general effect of the evidence which has been submitted to us, and which, owing to the comprehensive terms of reference, has necessarily extended over a very wide range, embracing, in addition to the general state of agriculture at home,

the condition of agriculture and of tenure in foreign countries, and also including a variety of subjects, such as the land laws, the system of local taxation, tithe rentcharge, railway rates, and other matters.

None of them could be accurately described as causes of depression, but their importance is fully recognised by the Commission, and they have considered and made recommendations with regard to them in a subsequent part of their Report.

In obedience to Your Majesty's command, we now desire to report the conclusions at which we have arrived upon the effect of the evidence which has been submitted to us as to—

1. The depressed condition of the agricultural interest, and the causes to which it is owing;
2. Whether those causes are of a permanent character, and how far they have been created or can be remedied by legislation.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the causes of agricultural depression, or as to remedies which may be suggested for it, it will be observed that there prevails complete uniformity of conviction as to the great extent and intensity of the distress which has fallen upon the agricultural community. Owners and occupiers have alike suffered from it. No description of estate or tenure has been exempted. The owner in fee and the life-tenant, the occupier, whether of large or of small holding, whether under lease, or custom, or agreement, or the provisions of the Agricultural Holdings Act,—all without distinction have been involved in a general calamity. It is important that this should be clearly understood, so that undue stress may not be laid upon suggestions for legislative changes, which, whether expedient or not, have no direct or immediate connexion with the distress of the present time.

The two most prominent causes which are assigned for that distress are bad seasons and foreign competition, aggravated by the increased cost of production and the heavy losses of live stock.

The extent to which agriculture has been injuriously affected by an unprecedented succession of bad seasons is very clearly shown by the abundant evidence to which we have referred in a preceding part of this Report.

BAD SEASONS.

Although farmers must always take their chances of the seasons, and accept the consequences as they come, yet in some districts and to some extent the worst effects of heavy rainfall may be mitigated by the prevention of floods and an extended system of arterial drainage, which would be a national benefit.

FOREIGN COMPETITION.

Next to a succession of unfavourable seasons, the effect of foreign competition is assigned by the majority of witnesses as a main cause of the embarrassments of the agricultural community.

In considering the representations which have been made to us as to the effect of foreign competition upon the agricultural interest of this country, it is but just to

recall the fact that the pressure of that competition is now found to be greatly in excess of the anticipations of the supporters, and of the apprehensions of the opponents of the repeal of the Corn Laws.

Whereas formerly the farmer was to some extent compensated by a higher price for a smaller yield, he has had in recent years to compete with an unusually large supply at greatly reduced prices. Evidence to this effect has been already referred to under the head of "Foreign Competition."

On the other hand, he has had the advantage of an extended supply of feeding stuffs, such as Indian corn, linseed and cotton cakes, and of artificial manures imported from abroad.

Disastrous as the combined effect of bad seasons and foreign competition has been, the witnesses who speak in the interest of agriculture fully recognise the advantage to the community that food should be cheap. They contend, however, that the low price of agricultural produce, beneficial as it is to the general community, lessens the ability of the land to bear the proportion of taxation which has heretofore been imposed upon it.

LOCAL TAXATION.

The history of the various imposts that are now levied for local purposes is very fully given in the evidence to which we have already referred. The first and the most important of these is the rate for the relief of the poor.

This rate, the heaviest local impost to which real property is subjected, has been taken as the foundation upon which the whole system of local rating has been built up. Although, to adopt the words of a resolution of the Committee of the House of Lords (1850) upon Parochial Assessments, "The relief of the poor is a national object, to which every description of property ought justly to be called upon to contribute, and the Act 43 Eliz. c. 2. contemplates such contribution according to the ability of every inhabitant;" and although the decisions of courts of law established the liability of personal property to rating for the relief of the poor, yet, since the most recent decision in that sense, it has continued to be exempted from such rating by the periodical Exemption Act.

The practical effect of this is, that personal property is exempted not only from rates for the relief of the poor, but from others, as the cost of public highways, police, and education.

This exemption is grounded, not upon justice or equity, but simply upon public convenience.

It is, no doubt, most important that expenditure for purposes which are exclusively local should be defrayed out of local resources.

Looking, however, to the difficulty of localising a rate upon all personal property, it would seem that the equity of the case can only be met by assigning certain local taxes to the local authorities for local purposes, or by defraying some portion of local expenditure out of the Consolidated Fund.

The justice of this view has been recognised from time to time by Parliamentary subventions in aid of local expenditure.

We are of opinion—

- 1st. That the cost of the maintenance of the in-door poor, instead of being paid, as at present, by a Union rate upon real property alone, should in future be defrayed either out of the Consolidated Fund or by a rate or taxes equitably adjusted according to means and substance; in other words, upon the personal as well as the real property of counties or of areas wider than existing unions; "In-door Poor" being deemed to include all lunatics, to whom the present subvention extends, and all children in district schools or boarded out under any order of the Local Government Board.
- 2nd. That a certain proportion of the local taxes should be assigned to the local authority in aid of local expenditure.

To the transfer of the maintenance of the poor from local rates to Imperial taxation, two objections, each of great weight, are usually urged.

It is said that such a change in the incidence of the rate would increase centralization, weakening local interest in local administration; and that it would also lead to great extravagance.

In respect to the transfer of the cost of out-door relief from local rating to general taxation, these objections are, no doubt, well founded. They do not, however, apply to the transfer of the cost of in-door relief. There is no reason to apprehend that the central authority would have occasion to exercise more control than they do at present, or that guardians would take less interest in the management of workhouses.

Upon the other hand, it is urged, that the change which we suggest would offer the strongest inducement to guardians to substitute in-door for out-door relief, and thus effect, together with a great reduction of expenditure, a vast improvement in the administration of the Poor Law.

RATES.

Whatever change may be made in the incidence of local taxation, we are of opinion that, without disturbing existing contracts of tenancy, all rates should in future be borne equally by owners and occupiers.

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR.

The difficulties of farmers during the last few years have been greatly aggravated by the condition of agricultural labour.

Owing to a variety of causes, labour has been more costly and less efficient, so that the average labour bill of an arable farm is at least 25 per cent. higher at the present time than it was some 20 years ago.

This condition of things is undoubtedly attended with serious embarrassment to the agricultural interest.

So far as the high price of agricultural labour results from the competition of other industries it must be accepted, just as the low price of agricultural produce must be accepted as the effect of foreign importation.

While the difficulties of the farmers have been thus increased, higher wages and more general employment have proportionately improved the condition of the labourer. It is most satisfactory to be assured that the labouring class has been scarcely, if at all, affected by the distress which has fallen so heavily upon owners as well as occu-

piers. Provisions have been cheap and employment abundant, while wages in a few districts only have been slightly reduced.

In connexion, however, with the unsatisfactory supply of labour, our attention has been directed to the insufficiency of house accommodation, and to the present system of education as it affects that class.

Although it is generally admitted that within the last twenty years very great progress has been made, especially upon large estates, in providing better cottages for agricultural labourers, yet, in many districts the accommodation is still very defective. To a considerable extent the interest of owners in attracting labour, and retaining it upon the land, would no doubt operate as a sufficient inducement to provide cottages with gardens or allotments, at reasonable rents, for farm labourers. It is due to the owners of land to state that, irrespective of considerations of interest, many of them have expended, and continue to expend, large sums of money to supply good and sufficient cottage accommodation.

A large proportion of cottages are, however, in the hands of small owners, who have neither the means nor the will to expend money on their improvement. The sanitary authorities throughout the country have certain powers to deal with cases of defective accommodation; and if these powers are exercised with judgment and impartiality, we may reasonably look forward to such improvement in the condition of labourers, as would render them less inclined to abandon the field for the town.

EDUCATION.

There is a very general complaint amongst farmers that the present system of education operates prejudicially to the interests of agriculture. Boys, it is said, are kept at school at an age at which they might be usefully employed upon the farm, and be thus acquiring habits and tastes which would fit them for farm service. As it is, the standard of education is so fixed that not only are the first years of industrial training lost before a boy can attain it, but when he does attain it, he acquires with it a desire for what he regards as more suitable occupation; so that the class which was formerly trained into farm service is now gradually absorbed into other industries. Farmers very naturally complain of this, as in districts in which there are School Boards they have to pay for education which not only deprives them, for the present, of the labour of boys, and obliges them to pay men's wages for boys' work, but tends to drain from the land the sources of future labour.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

We have received a good deal of evidence upon the subject of agricultural education in Great Britain and foreign countries, and the desirableness of encouraging scientific together with practical instruction has been urged by several witnesses.

We concur in these opinions, and, whilst we are not prepared to suggest the manner in which this instruction should be supplied, we are of opinion that the subject is well worthy of consideration.

Compared with some foreign countries, the facilities for obtaining technical education in Great Britain are very limited, although several county schools have been established for the education of the sons of farmers. The advantages of such

an institution as Cirencester College are practically limited to those who, intending to adopt the career of estate agents, to farm, or to emigrate, are able to afford an expense beyond the reach of the ordinary farmer. Some impulse has been given to scientific agricultural education by the scholarships and bursaries founded by the Royal Agricultural Society of England, and the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland. In addition to these, the Science and Art Department hold out considerable inducement by the conditions under which they offer half the cost of county scholarships.

RENT.

It has been suggested in the course of this inquiry that for many years previous to 1875 rents had been unduly raised. The weight of evidence, however, satisfies us that such a practice was exceptional, especially on large estates, and might be attributed in a great measure to imprudent competition on the part of tenants. It would also seem that this competition was to a considerable degree encouraged by the employment of capital in the shape of advances made by country bankers on personal security, as well as by cattle dealers, salesmen, and others. The sudden withdrawal of such accommodation, and the calling in of loans so made, have, in our opinion, greatly contributed to the late difficulties of the tenant farmers.

Upon the important question of the effect of rent upon agricultural depression, several witnesses have communicated their views.

While we strongly object to any legislative interference with arrangements on the question of rent between landlord and tenant, we are of opinion that it will be for the interest of both parties that rents should be so fixed by voluntary agreement as to enable farmers to meet the difficulties of their position.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES (ANIMALS) ACT.

The evidence to which we have already referred, proves that the effect of the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act has been most beneficial. Wherever the local authorities have carried out its provisions with strictness, it has been successful in checking the spread of disease. The general effect is shown by the diminished number of outbreaks, and of animals attacked with foot-and-mouth disease during the last eighteen months, compared with former periods when the disease prevailed.

Pleuro-pneumonia is steadily and rapidly declining throughout the country.

These diseases, which are both of foreign origin, are brought into the foreign animals wharves from time to time. Although every precaution is taken, there can be no doubt that foot-and-mouth disease has been introduced into this country from abroad by these means. This has led to the demand for the exclusion of live stock from infected countries, which has been urged by so many of the witnesses to whose evidence upon the subject we have already referred.

The evidence as to the discouragement which was given to the breeding of cattle and sheep in Great Britain, and the diminution in the supply of meat which arose from extensive disease in the country, appears to us to be conclusive.

Looking to the great importance of the home supply of meat as compared with the supply of live animals from abroad, and to the facility with which dead meat can be imported in the place of animals that are alive, we recommend that the landing of foreign live animals should not be permitted in future from any countries as

to which the Privy Council are not satisfied that they are perfectly free from contagious disease.

In the course of this inquiry four other subjects have been more especially brought under our notice, and various suggestions with reference to them have been submitted to us:—

Defects in the land laws;

Want of security and of compensation for tenants' improvements;

The operation of the laws of distress and hypothec, and

Restrictive covenants,

have all been referred to either as causes of agricultural depression or as tending to aggravate it.

LAND LAWS.

We have already called attention to the fact that owners in fee farming their own land, and having sufficient command of capital have suffered not less than life tenants, or occupiers of holdings under ordinary covenants. If, therefore, we refer to certain proposed changes we would not be understood to imply that any different condition of land tenure or of occupation would have materially mitigated the severity of the recent depression or would prevent its recurrence.

The "Settled Land Bill," presented by Earl Cairns to the House of Lords, and sanctioned by that branch of the legislature, appears to us to be a bold, comprehensive, and most valuable measure. The ample powers which it confers upon life-tenants will, if it becomes law, obviate many of the objections that have been urged against the existing system of English land laws.

That measure not only confers upon the tenant for life large powers of sale, exchange, and partition, as well as of leasing, but also provides for the due application of all purchase and other capital money.

Suggestions have been offered to us by many witnesses on other matters connected with the Land Laws, which are not comprised within the range of the Settled Land Bill. They seem to us to lie beyond the scope of the Commission.

Changes have indeed been suggested with a view to encourage the establishment of a peasant proprietary.

While we deem it highly expedient to facilitate and cheapen the transfer of land, we are of opinion that no special facilities should be given to stimulate the artificial growth of a system which appears to be ill adapted to the habits of the people or to the condition of agriculture in this country.

CULTIVATION OF LAND.

Among the suggestions that have been made for the amelioration of the prospects of the tenant farmer, the extension of the growth of market garden crops on a portion of the farm, and as a part of one or more of the courses in the usual rotation, deserves notice. The extent to which this suggestion is applicable varies necessarily in different country districts; but it seems probable that on some farms, hard fruit, and the less tender kind of vegetables might be grown to advantage, if

sufficient capital were applied to the fertilization and cultivation of the land, and an adequate amount of attention were given to the management of the crops. But the success of husbandry of this description must mainly depend upon suitability of soil and climate, as well as upon facility of railway carriage and proximity to large centres of population. Where these conditions are wanting, small farming, the *petite culture* of continental countries, has but slight chance of success.

DAIRY FARMING.

There appears to be a general agreement that although agricultural depression has been less intense in dairy than in arable districts, the yield of milk was much diminished, and the quality deteriorated owing to the inferiority of grass due to the continuance of wet weather during the past few years.

The price of ordinary cheese has been seriously lowered by unusually large imports from abroad.

Sufficient attention does not appear to have been hitherto devoted to first-class dairy products, and thus many dairy farmers have suffered considerably.

The production and sale of milk are largely on the increase; it is now sent by railway in considerable quantities to London and other populous centres, and this branch of farming is assuming much larger proportions. The growing demand for milk has apparently had great influence in directing the attention of landowners and farmers to the importance of dairy farming as possibly a profitable branch of husbandry, and to the desirableness of laying down land to grass.

ADULTERATION.

Of the difficulties with which farmers have to contend in the pursuit of their business, not the least formidable is the adulteration or falsification of such articles as artificial manures, feeding stuffs, and seeds; whilst farm produce has to compete with imitations, such as artificial butter, spurious cheese, and materials other than malt and hops for brewing beer. The Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, and other local societies, have done much to protect their members from such practices, but we think that the same protection should be given to farmers by including in the duties of the county analysts that of analysing such of the articles referred to as are not now the subject of analysis by them.

We also recommend that steps should be taken to ensure that all agricultural products, whether manufactured at home or abroad, for consumption by the public or for use by the farmer in his business, should be sold under such designations as will accurately indicate their true composition.

COMPENSATION FOR UNEXHAUSTED IMPROVEMENTS.

We are of opinion that notwithstanding the beneficial effects of the Agricultural Holdings Act, there are many parts of Great Britain in which no sufficient compensation for his unexhausted improvements is secured to the tenant. In many cases landlords have not offered, and tenants have omitted to ask for the fair compensation which we believe it is the interest of both that the tenant should enjoy, and to which we think he is entitled.

In some counties and districts this compensation is given by established customs, in others such customs are insufficient, or do not exist.

Upon the most careful consideration of the evidence before us, we have arrived at the conclusion that further legislative provision should be made for securing to tenants the compensation to which they are equitably entitled in respect of their outlay, and we recommend that the principles of the Agricultural Holdings Act relating to compensation should be made compulsory in all cases where such compensation is not otherwise provided for.

It would, however, in our opinion, be advisable so far to amend the provisions of the Act as to make the compensation depend upon the additional value given to the holding. And we wish it to be understood that no compensation should be required to be paid by the landlord or incoming tenant except for outlays which are valuable to him in the future cultivation of the farm.

It having been represented to us that in Scotland difficulties arise connected with arbitrations between landlord and tenant on a change of tenancy, and between outgoing and incoming tenants, and in view of these arbitrations taking a wider scope, should the suggestion we make become the law of the land, entitling tenants to be paid compensation for their unexhausted capital left in the holding, or for permanent improvements made by them, we think it would be advisable, while leaving parties interested free to make choice of any of the modes by which arbiters are chosen and appointed at the present time, to have in each county a certain number of thoroughly qualified men named by the Sheriff Principal, one or other of whom shall be appointed by the sheriff or his substitute to act as overman in the case of the arbiters appointed by the parties failing to agree upon the selection of an overman, or as sole arbiter, should there be any failure in the nomination of arbiter by the parties. All fees, expenses, &c., connected with such arbitrations to be levied on the parties interested, but to be in such proportion to each as the arbiter may determine, subject to taxation by the auditor of the Sheriff's Court.

RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS.

Many of the witnesses have represented to us that stringent covenants as to cropping and the sale of produce unduly hamper the farmer in the pursuit of his business, and do not in effect tend to increase the fertility of the soil.

We believe that the more restrictive of these covenants will be found in the older forms of leases and agreements which were prepared at a period when all the conditions of agriculture were different from those now prevalent on well-managed estates.

Whilst we are not prepared to recommend the compulsory abolition of all such restrictions, we consider that the increased intelligence which has been manifested by those engaged in agriculture, and the general improvement in the system of cultivation which is now in progress would in many cases justify their removal.

LAW OF DISTRESS.

Although the total abolition of the law of distress has been suggested in the course of this inquiry, we cannot recommend so extreme a measure. Such a change would in our opinion operate to the prejudice of farmers, especially of the smaller class of holders.

We would, however, propose to limit the power of distraint to two years and to exempt hired machinery and agisted cattle from the operation of the law, a change which has been urged by many witnesses.

We consider that the Act passed in 1880, entitled "An Act to abolish the Land-lords' Right of Hypothec for Rent in Scotland," requires some amendment.

TITHES RENTCHARGE.

It will have been seen from a preceding part of this Report, that complaints have been very generally made of the mode in which the tithe averages are taken.

To meet these complaints we recommend that the rentcharge should be a fixed sum, that it should be paid by the landlord, and that every facility should be given for its redemption.

Objections have been raised against extraordinary tithes, but they appear to rest, not on principle, but on the peculiar mode of the collection of such tithes. The principle of all tithes, both of ordinary and of extraordinary alike, is that a certain portion of the produce of the land belongs of right to a special owner. But extraordinary tithes have a peculiarity of their own. The crops on which they are collected are not grown continuously; they may cease for a while, and then be cultivated again. Payment of the extraordinary tithe naturally follows the same process; it is paid when the crops are grown; it is not demanded when their growth is suspended. There is nothing in this fact which specially attacks the right to extraordinary tithe. That right remains identical with that to ordinary tithe.

RAILWAY RATES.

In a preceding part of this Report we have directed attention to the complaints of producers, not only of the inequality of railway rates as affecting home producers, but of the still more serious disadvantage arising from preferential rates for foreign commodities.

The present law clearly contemplates that similar treatment should be accorded to similar goods carried under similar conditions, but the evidence before us shows that in many cases such equality does not exist; and we would recommend that the law should be so amended as to provide a cheap and speedy means of securing the equality contemplated by the existing law.

We are not, however, prepared to recommend that railway companies should be debarred by legislative enactment from offering special terms for through traffic from abroad.

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

With reference to the appointment of a Minister of Agriculture, we believe that a system corresponding to that which prevails in foreign countries would be attended with advantage, and we recommend that the administration of all matters connected with agriculture should be vested in one public department.

In submitting to Your Majesty the preceding recommendations we desire, in conclusion, to observe that—

Of the immediate causes of agricultural depression it cannot be said that any one of them is necessarily of a "permanent character." Bad and good seasons appear to come in cycles, and with them alternations of agricultural prosperity or depression.

This, the main cause of depression, no legislation can control.

How far foreign competition may affect the home producer in the future it is impossible to calculate with any degree of certainty. That its effect will continue to be felt may be assumed as certain.

It is to be hoped that the proposals which we have made will, if adopted, eventually place all classes connected with land in a better position to meet those difficulties to which they are necessarily exposed, and which are sure to be, as they always have been, of periodical recurrence.

We have already indicated various matters upon which legislative interference can benefit directly the agricultural classes of this country. But no interference between classes, between owners and occupiers, or between employers and labourers, can render any one of them independent of the other. We cannot recall a period in our history in which the relations of these classes have been more severely tried than during the existing depression. Owners have, as a rule, borne their share of a common calamity, and they, as well as occupiers, have done much to avert the distress from the class who are least able to bear it. It is satisfactory to know that, as we have already observed, upon the labourer it has fallen more lightly than upon either owner or occupier. The best hope for the prosperity of agriculture lies in the mutual confidence and friendly relations of the three classes directly engaged in it, and in the common conviction that their interests are inseparable.

In concluding this Report we may be allowed to record our opinion that the condition of British agriculture has never been the subject of a more comprehensive and laborious inquiry than that in which we have been engaged. The mass of evidence which we have now the honour to submit for Your Majesty's consideration, collected, we believe, with the greatest care and impartiality, presents an exhaustive record of the extent and immediate effects of the agricultural depression, of the causes to which that depression may be attributed, and of the various suggestions submitted to us from opposite points of view for ameliorating the condition of the agricultural classes.

For the valuable information which has been thus collected we have to express our acknowledgments to the witnesses who have come before us, and also our sense of the aid which has been rendered by the reports and evidence of our Assistant Commissioners:

All which we humbly submit to Your Majesty.

RICHMOND AND GORDON.
BUCCLEUCH, &c.
VERNON.
JAMES STANSFELD.
W. H. STEPHENSON.
R. NIGEL F. KINGSOOTE.
HENRY CHAPLIN.
JOHN CLAY.
JOS. COWEN.
MITCHELL HENRY.
CHARLES HOWARD.
J. L. NAPER.
ROBERT PATERSON.
BONAMY PRICE.
C. T. RITCHIE.
E. B. HUNTER BODWELL.
WILLIAM STRATTON.
JACOB WILSON.

WILLIAM A. FEE,
Secretary.

Supplementary Memorandum by Lord Vernon.

I happen to be unable to concur with my colleagues in that portion of the Report which refers to the question of compensation for unexhausted improvements.

On this subject I have deemed it right to express my independent opinion. This, with an outline of the mode in which it might, in my judgment, be carried into effect, I have now the honour to submit.

1. The principle of compensating outgoing tenants for the unexhausted value of improvements which they have made on their farms appears to be accepted by all witnesses who have been examined on the subject, partly on the ground of fairness towards the tenant, but partly also on the broader ground that unless such compensation is secured to him the maximum fertility of the soil of the country cannot be uninterruptedly maintained.

2. Whilst, however, all the witnesses agreed on the principle of compensation to outgoing tenants for unexhausted improvements, they differed in their opinions as to the mode in which it should be secured. Some contended that the obligation to compensate them should be made absolutely compulsory by legislation, but others expressed the opinion that liberty of action between landlord and tenant should not be interfered with.

3. I concur in the opinion of several witnesses of wide experience, who urge that while due regard should be had to the interest of the outgoing tenant, equal regard should be had to that of the outgoing tenant's successor in the farm, whether such successor be the landlord or the incoming tenant. In practice, the incoming tenant has usually to bear the weight of the payments to the outgoing tenant; and when such payments are heavy the incoming tenant not only requires a larger capital to enable him to commence farming, but also suffers from the inconvenience of having a considerable part of his capital locked up for a period more or less long.

4. It would also seem to be fair and reasonable that the rights of the landlord, whether he be the successor in the farm or not, and the tenant at the determination of a tenancy should be correlative; that is to say, that as the landlord should be placed under an obligation to compensate the outgoing tenant for unexhausted improvements effected by him, so the tenant should be placed under an obligation to compensate the landlord for waste, for dilapidations, and for any other matters done or omitted to be done by him whereby the farm has been deteriorated.

5. As the law now stands outgoing tenants may be compensated for their unexhausted improvements—

- By (A) Private agreement.
- (B) The custom of the country.
- (C) By the Agricultural Holdings (England) Act, 1875.

But it is contended that this state of the law is not satisfactory for, amongst others, the following reasons:—

As regards A, because tenants are not in a sufficiently good position to be able to contract with landlords on equal terms.

As regards B, because "custom," even when liberal, is not always sufficiently comprehensive to embrace all improvements.

And as regards C, because the Act is permissive and not compulsory.

6. Although every outgoing tenant is in my opinion entitled to be compensated for the beneficial value of the improvements which he may leave upon his farm of which he has not reaped the entire fruit, landlords and tenants should be left perfectly free to make such arrangements as regards compensation as may seem to them to be desirable.

7. In the absence of any agreement on the part of a landlord to compensate an outgoing tenant for the beneficial value of purchased feeding-stuffs and manures other than nitrogenous manures which that tenant has applied to his farm, compensation should be secured to him by Act of Parliament, which Act should be applicable to Scotland as well as to England. The Act, however, ought not to define or enumerate improvements, nor prescribe any limit of time within which any class of them should be deemed to continue unexhausted. But it should provide,—

(1.) That where an outgoing tenant has made improvements upon his farm which are in their nature lasting, such as those called "improvements of the first class" in the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1875, with the previous consent in writing of the landlord, but not otherwise, he should be entitled to payment for their value at the time of quitting his farm, without any limitation of time as to the maximum period of their duration, but to the extent only that they add to the letting value of the farm; and

(2.) That the same rule should apply where the outgoing tenant has made improvements upon his farm, the effect of which, though not so lasting, yet continues for some time, such as those called "improvements of the second class" in the above-mentioned Act; for it has been proved by the evidence not only of scientific but also of practical witnesses, that the application to the land of substances enumerated in the second class of improvements in the Agricultural Holdings Act, if made judiciously, may be far more beneficial to the landlord or incoming tenant than is provided for in that Act; and that, on the other hand, no benefit, but possibly injury, may accrue to the landlord if the tenant should have improperly used or applied them.

8. The differences of soil and climate and the varying duration of the action of manures, preclude the possibility of prescribing accurately any limit of time for their exhaustion which is generally applicable throughout the country.

9. The principle which the Agricultural Holdings Act prescribes for ascertaining the amount of the tenant's compensation in respect of the application to land of purchased artificial or other purchased manure, and in respect of the consumption on the farm by cattle, sheep, or pigs, of cake or other feeding-stuffs not produced on the farm, viz., "such proportion of the sum properly laid out by the tenant on the improvement as fairly represents the value thereof at the determination of the tenancy" "to an incoming tenant," appears to me to be eminently just. But as scientific and other evidence goes to show that nitrogenous manures, such as nitrate of soda and sulphate of ammonia, do not convey any permanent or lasting fertilising property to the land, but merely cause it to produce a larger crop in the year in which they are applied, no compensation should be allowed to an outgoing tenant in respect of the application to the land of such manures.

10. It has been pointed out by several witnesses, that it is very difficult to ascertain the intrinsic value to an incoming tenant of the unexhausted residue of purchased manures and feeding-stuffs, which, as a rule, have been applied to the land or consumed by the live stock of the farm respectively many months before, and are necessarily underground, and consequently not visible or tangible at the time of valuation. The genuineness of these substances—many of which, when offered for sale in the market, are often adulterated and sold at a price greatly in excess of their true value—and their proper use, increase the difficulty in arriving at an equitable valuation between an incoming and outgoing tenant as regards them.

11. For these reasons it seems to follow that the amount of compensation to be awarded to an outgoing tenant in respect of the use of purchased artificial or other purchased manures or feeding-stuffs converted into manure can be more correctly ascertained by a valuation of the crops of the farm to which they have been applied, than by taking into account the actual outlay upon them, or otherwise estimating their unexhausted value; the crops being visible and tangible, which is not the case with the manures or feeding-stuffs when once used. To ascertain the amount of such compensation I recommend the following procedure:—

I. In the case of yearly tenancies the length of notice to determine the tenancy, to be given by either the landlord to the tenant or by the tenant to the landlord, should be not less than twelve calendar months in every case.

39,219
(A. Bruce).

27,207-13
(The Hon. Sec.
Genl.)
27,207-21
(Mr J. L.
Guthrie)
27,212-21,213
(Mr. Vailcourt).

42,222-24
(Genl. of Arrol).
42,223
(W. G. Little).
42,224, 22,225
(J. Frost).

Agricultural
Holdings
Act, 1875,
clause 9.

22,226
(S. Brownjohn).
42,226-29
(W. Freshfield).
22,231-2
(Mr. Vailcourt).
42,232-29
22,235
(J. Hunter).
22,238
(J. Vailcourt).

22,239-42
(A. Brown).
22,240
(J. Gilmour).
42,241-42
(J. Vailcourt).
22,242
(J. Vailcourt).
22,243
(J. Vailcourt).
22,244, 22,245
(Mr. Vailcourt).
22,246
(J. Vailcourt).
(J. Vailcourt).
22,247-48
(J. Vailcourt).

42,249
(W. G. Little).
22,250
(Mr J. L. Gilmour).
22,251
(Mr J. L. Gilmour).
22,252
(J. Gilmour).
22,253
(J. Gilmour).

- II. If the parties cannot, at the time when notice is given, in the case of a yearly tenancy or at the commencement of the last year of the tenancy in the case of a lease, agree upon the amount of compensation, such amount should be determined by valuation.
- III. If the parties concur, a single valuer should be appointed by them jointly to make the valuation. If they do not, each party should at the time when notice is given, or at the commencement of the last year of the tenancy, as the case might be, or within fourteen days after, appoint in writing a valuer, and the valuers should apply forthwith to the Inclosure Commissioners to appoint an umpire, and upon such application the Inclosure Commissioners should make the appointment; but the umpire should not be called upon to act except the valuers differed. The decision of the valuers or the umpire as the case might be should be final.
- IV. The valuation should be made during the year preceding the end of the tenancy, and not as at present after the tenancy has expired. The valuer, valuers, or the umpire, should in that year visit and inspect the farm, as often, and at such reasonable times, as may be necessary to enable them to form an accurate judgment of the state and condition of the farm, and of the crops thereon; they should take cognisance of the acts of husbandry performed, of the manures, whether artificial or otherwise, and feeding-stuffs used or remaining for use, and of any special circumstance by which the interest of the outgoing tenant or his successor may be affected.
- V. The valuer, valuers, or umpire should compare the bulk of the crops of each kind upon the farm with the average crops in the district on similar land, and in ascertaining the amount of compensation should have regard to such comparison.
- VI. The tenant should be required to give the valuer, valuers, or umpire, due notice of the intended application of manures to each crop; and to hand to them, or him, the receipts for the money paid for all manures and feeding-stuffs for the use of which he claims compensation.
- VII. The valuer, valuers, or umpire should have power to take samples and have analyses made of the manures used and feeding-stuffs consumed upon the farm; and the tenant should be required to afford them opportunity to take such samples.
- VIII. In all other respects the valuation might follow the ordinary mode of procedure used in arbitrations.

12. Considering the difference of local circumstances, the customs of the country, although sometimes very onerous, appear to afford the only practicable method for the valuation of tillages performed for the benefit of the outgoing tenant's successor, of hay, straw, and other severed crops left on the farm, and of the young seeds growing thereon. In these respects such customs cannot well be interfered with, but all payments under them should be proportionate to the benefit to be derived by the incoming tenant.

13. Inasmuch as a fair valuation of unexhausted improvements is of great pecuniary importance to both the outgoing tenant and his successor in the farm, it is essential that all such valuations should be conducted by men of honour and independence, who combine practical experience with scientific knowledge. In order to secure this, valuers should hold some official certificate for their fitness to perform their duties.

(Signed) VERNON.

Supplementary Memorandum by Mr. Stansfeld.

I greatly regret that my unavoidable absence from the last sitting of the Commission compels me to make a reserve upon some points, not of primary importance, in the report of my colleague with which, generally, I cordially concur.

1. I approve of the suggestion that the cost of in-maintenance should be placed on rates or local taxes equitably adjusted according to means and substance, but I think that to defray them out of the Consolidated Fund would lead to an increase of centralisation and to extravagance.

2. The inclination of my opinion is in favour of the repeal of the law of distress.

3. I do not think it possible to indicate accurately the true composition of manufactured articles by their designation. I do not think that there is any analogy between fraudulently adulterated articles, such as some artificial manures feeding stuffs and seeds, and beer brewed not exclusively from malt and hops.

It is part of the acknowledged policy both of past and present excise laws that beer should be so produced, and it is and long has been so produced in large quantities subject to excise duty and supervision.

(Signed) JAMES STANSFELD.

July 12, 1882.

Supplementary Memorandum by Mr. Chaplin.

Being in accord generally with the views of my colleagues, I have signed the Report, but I wish to put on record my conviction that, if further had seasons follow upon those which have produced such general distress, this country must be prepared either to witness the partial, if not the general, collapse of the agricultural interest, or else to provide relief of a more definite and immediate character than has been hitherto proposed. With respect to certain portions of the Report, I desire to submit the following observations:—

As regards the recommendations on the subject of Local Taxation, I think the proposed relief should not be limited to the maintenance of the indoor poor, as defined in the Report, but should be extended to other objects of national interest, which are now, either partly or wholly, a charge on local rates.

Considering the prominence which has been given to foreign competition as a leading cause of agricultural distress, and the place it holds in the evidence of so many witnesses, I think it has scarcely received sufficient notice in the Report, and I desire to state the reasons which have led me to concur in omitting to offer any definite proposal on the subject.

Witnesses of experience, who have been examined before the Commission, have expressed the most confident opinions that American wheat, and American beef, could and would be sold in future in this country at prices at which, according to the evidence we have taken, English agriculturists would be unable to produce English wheat and English beef at a profit upon farms of average quality, even supposing they were held rent-free.

American beef, it was said, would pay the exporter at 6d. a lb. delivered in England, whilst wheat would realise a profit at prices which were variously estimated, ranging between 42s. and 44s. a quarter as the highest and 33s. and 32s. as the lowest price which was named in all the earlier evidence which we have had upon the subject.

It is impossible to doubt that, at prices such as these, American competition would exercise a most disastrous influence upon the future production of wheat and beef as an industry in England.

One witness stated this conviction, in which I concur, that at 35s. a quarter wheat growing in Great Britain must cease to be an industry at all.

Nor does it appear, from any evidence before us, that there are any substitutes to take its place to any appreciable extent.

In reference to this subject, the Report expresses the opinion with regard to "market gardening" and "dairy farming," that, while there is room for some expansion in the milk trade, and while the production of vegetables and fruit may, under certain conditions, be encouraged with advantage, these branches of agricultural industry are equally dependent upon their locality and access to a market, and it is only to a limited extent and within a limited area that a trade in these commodities could be conducted with a profit. In that opinion I entirely concur. No other branch of agricultural industry is suggested by the evidence as capable of being profitably substituted for the growing of wheat and the production of beef in those districts where the soil is not adapted for the production of barley and of sheep; and under these circumstances it would appear that a permanent competition with America in respect to these commodities, at the prices indicated by many of the witnesses whom we have examined, would be fatally injurious to the chief industry of England, in some of the largest and most important agricultural districts of the country.

Whether, however, a competition at such prices is likely to be permanent is a matter which is open to much question, and, after carefully weighing the evidence which we have taken, I incline to an opposite opinion; otherwise I should have felt it my duty to submit a definite proposition with regard to it. Undoubtedly for a time the prices of home produce were seriously depressed by American competition, and the Report very justly and prominently refers to it as one of the principal causes of agricultural depression in the past.

But, on the other hand, it must be observed that the prices which are being realised for English wheat and English beef to-day are very different from the future standard of those prices as indicated by the evidence which has been referred to; and it cannot be denied that the opinions which were so confidently expressed upon this subject are not supported by the facts, as to prices, at the present time.

Moreover, American competition, so far as it affects the price of English products, instead of increasing, would appear to be steadily diminishing, especially with regard to meat; and some of the more recent evidence (in particular that of Mr. Clay, our American Sub-Commissioner, specially charged to obtain information on this subject) affords ground for the belief that this decrease in competition, especially in wheat, is likely to be maintained.

Mr. Clay lays stress upon the fact that both the value of land and the price of labour in the West of America has very materially risen, and he expresses the opinion "that the farmers of the West cannot possibly produce wheat so cheaply as they did" in consequence of this rise; and it is undoubtedly the case that, so far from being permanently lowered, the prices of English beef and English wheat, from whatever cause, have risen rather than fallen, in spite of American competition, since this inquiry began.

Looking to these facts, as well as to some of the latest evidence on American competition which has come before the Commission, it would seem that the fears which were at one time entertained in many quarters in regard to it have been to some extent without foundation, and that, with a return of favourable seasons, there is reason to hope that the English agriculturist will be able to successfully compete with any competition from abroad which, as far as we can judge, he may be called upon to undergo.

If this hope, however, is to be fulfilled, it is essential that he shall be no longer prejudiced by the continued grant of preferential rates now allowed to foreign produce by some of the leading railway companies.

There are other matters dealt with in the Report to which I should have wished also to refer, and more especially to the subjects of the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875 and of compensation for unexhausted improvements; but as I agree in the main with the recommendations contained in the Report, I am unwilling to add to the length of this Memorandum.

11th July 1882.

HENRY CHAPLIN.

Supplementary Memorandum by Mr. John Clay.

THOUGH signing the Report, I find it incumbent on me to dissent on several points under the following heads:

1. Compensation for unexhausted improvements and increased fertility.
2. Rent.
3. The law of entail.
4. The law of distraint and the Act of Sederunt of 1756 in Scotland.
5. The right of tenants to assign their leases under certain circumstances.
6. The management of landed estates.
7. Emigration.

My motive for this dissent is for the purpose of advocating the adoption of more decisive remedial measures than are suggested in this Report, because I think that unless these are adopted, not only will landed proprietors and tenants continue to suffer from agricultural depression in its various phases, but also the country at large.

1. With regard to compensation for unexhausted improvements and increased fertility, notwithstanding the full and distinct evidence taken by the Commission proving that the farmer is entitled to the most complete and absolute security for the capital he has invested in the cultivation of the land, the Report does not specify or indicate any sufficient means of affording such absolute security, or of giving the tenant that protection to which he is entitled, nor does it recommend any effectual measure to secure the whole interest of the tenant in his improvements, including his interest in his tenure. More particularly, while agreeing with the Report that legislative provision should be made for securing to tenants compensation in respect to their outlays, I go further, and think that the result of a tenant's energy and industry expended in improved fertility are as much capital as the cash he invests, and are as much entitled to legislative protection. The remedy proposed in the Report appears to me to be inadequate. It is proposed to make the English Agricultural Holdings Act compulsory where compensation is not otherwise provided for, with the qualification that no compensation should be paid by an incoming tenant, except for outlays which are of value to him in the future cultivation of the farm, and that the compensation clauses should depend upon the additional value given to the holding. The Agricultural Holdings Act has admitted a principle, but the allowances arranged for by it are inadequate, and do not embrace increased fertility and value arising from the skilful and thorough cultivation of the land, and by its being kept in high condition. Most buildings are good for 50 years, while by the Act 20 only are allowed. Most drainage works are good for 30 years, and 20 only are allowed. Most manures are good for longer periods than the Agricultural Holdings Act allows, and some are not allowed for at all; while high cultivation, cleanliness, and condition of the soil are ignored.

COMPEN-
SATION.

The compensation to be paid for improvements is naturally a charge upon the landlord's interest, and ought not to be a burden upon the capital of the incoming tenant, the landlord obtains an article of enhanced value and will recoup himself by the increased rent which an incoming tenant will be willing to pay for the ameliorated condition and increased fertility of the subject he hires.

The Agricultural Holdings Act is deficient in securing to the landlord the dilapidations that the tenant has caused to his property, and is justly entitled to compensation for the same on the same principle and mode as the outgoing tenant is allowed for his ameliorations.

Compensation for ameliorated condition being admitted, the Report should, in my opinion, have recommended a course by which values should be assessed. The natural course seems to me to be by arbitration, with a referee appointed by the Government in each district to act as overman in case of the arbiters differing in opinion, such referee to be a practical agriculturalist engaged in farming; or, the appointment of a referee might be placed under the jurisdiction of the Enclosure Commissioners.

In concluding this subject, I may refer to the following authorities:—

The Duke of Richmond and Gordon, in moving the Agricultural Holdings Act on 14th April 1876, said, "The Government have thought that a measure should be brought in to secure the tenant the capital he has invested in the soil, and give the tenant that protection to which he is entitled; on the other hand, it does not invade the rights of the landlord, which in this country have always been held sacred."

The Earl of Beaconsfield, upon the same occasion, characterized the measure "As protecting the tenant's investments in the soil by placing him in a juster position, and inducing him to apply capital to the soil, an application which it is in the interest of all classes to encourage."

When moving for the appointment of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1879, his Lordship also used the following remarkable words: "I would be deeply disappointed if one result of the labours of the Royal Commission is not to afford the tenant the most complete and absolute security for the capital he has invested in the cultivation of the land." Mr. Gladstone said at Leeds in 1881, "It is of capital and immediate importance for the farmers to see that effectual and not abortive measures are taken to secure the whole interest of the tenant, not a part of that interest, but the whole interest in his improvements, and his interest, as the law may define it, in his tenure."

RENT.

2. With reference to the subject of rent, ample evidence has been given before the Commission on this most important subject, its increase during the last 25 years, and the great losses that tenant farmers have sustained thereby. The Report does not sufficiently deal with this increase as an important factor in the agricultural depression, and one which has helped to bring about the present crisis in the agriculture of the country, a crisis which for intensity, acuteness, and extent, has never before been experienced in this country, and one which involves the very basis of the country's welfare and prosperity. Our Sub-commissioners have corroborated the existence of this most unfortunate state of affairs in nearly every county of England and Scotland, and I am certain that if the seventh year, 1881, was taken into account, the losses in that year would be by far the heaviest, and if the history of the agriculture of this country for the last seven years was written, that of the past year would form one of its blackest pages. Both arable and hill farmers are in the same condition; for the high rents, the deficiency of marketable produce, and the increased cost of labour, have brought many of them into the bankruptcy list, while many others have been brought to that position that they have not capital left for the ordinary cultivation of the soil. Hill farmers, on the other hand, have been able to hold out longer, but now, with the price of wool reduced to one half of the former average price, which formed part of the sheep farmers basis for calculating the rent which he could afford to pay, his prospects are almost as dark as those of the arable farmer, especially if the serious decrease of stock, and the damage that was done to the flocks by the unparalleled severity of winter of 1880-81, are taken into account. The well-known definition of rent is "the surplus yielded by the land after all legitimate expenses connected with its cultivation, interest on capital, and reward for industry, have been sufficiently allowed for." When there is no surplus, the rent has to be paid out of the tenant's capital, when an unprecedented succession of bad seasons occur, such as we have lately experienced, for which no human calculations could have been made; it is only a question of time how long the present tenants can have it in their power to pay any rent at all. A re-adjustment of rent is most urgently required by the large majority of the farmers in the country, and it is for the interests not less of landlords than of tenants that a re-adjustment should take place at once to meet the altered circumstances with which farmers have now to contend. The Report, in my opinion, should distinctly recommend such re-adjustment of rent for the adoption of the landlords. An abatement of rent for one or two years will not meet the difficulty, or allow tenants to recoup themselves and do justice to the land; what is required is a permanent reduction of rent to give the tenants some hope of regaining their lost capital, and an impetus to increase the fertility of their farms by the continued high cultivation of the land.

Sir James Caird puts the rise of rent in England for the last 18 years at 21 per cent., and in Scotland at 26 per cent., but I have no doubt that if we went back 25 years the rise would be 25 per cent. for England, and 30 per cent. for Scotland. The case is so urgent and pressing that nothing less than a reduction of

rent of from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. will save the present tenantry from ruin ; and in cases, on estates where the fatal policy of rack-renting has been adopted, in that case, 35 per cent. will not meet the tenants requirements. Evidence has also been given that rents have been unduly forced up by class laws, false and inflated competition, also by the letting of farms by tender, and screwing out of tenants more than what could honestly be paid from the produce of the soil.

3. The abolition of the law of entail should have been recommended in the Report, for it prevents landlords who hold their estates under entail from making sufficient allowance for the younger members of the family and from having the interest that they would otherwise have in the permanent improvement of their properties, and the law on that account prevents the free progress of agriculture, and will continue to do so more than ever under the altered circumstances of the present time. This law has had a direct influence in retarding the skilful cultivation of the soil, for it has the effect of inducing a proprietor to prefer an indifferent tenant, who for a few years may promise to give a little higher rent for a farm, to a good tenant who will permanently increase the value of it. The result is that in the case of a 300 acre farm, worth 10,000*l.* sterling, let in the way I have indicated to an indifferent tenant, the market value of the land at the end of the had tenant's occupancy is reduced to 7,000*l.* sterling, whereas if it had been let to a good tenant, the market value would have been raised to 12,000*l.* or 13,000*l.* sterling. Thus the agriculture of the country at large suffers from the law of entail, for there can be no doubt that it is for the benefit of the landlord as well as the country that the land should be kept in as high a state of fertility as possible, and that every law which interferes in any way with a high state of cultivation being maintained should be abolished. The Report should also have recommended a law regulating the easy and cheap transfer of land for the whole of Great Britain.

4. The Report should have recommended the total abolition of the law of distraint and the Act of Sederunt of 1756 in Scotland, for by these most unjust laws the rents of farms have been raised far above their real value, and farmers have had to offer higher, and in most cases excessive rents, and more particularly in this the case in regard to small farms because there is greater competition for these than for larger farms. Landlords trusting to these laws accept tenants with insufficient capital and men who know nothing about the cultivation of the soil, whom, without these laws, they would not take, and thus the rent of land is artificially raised far beyond what can be legitimately paid. The real question at issue is whether there is anything in the relation of a landlord to his tenant which entitles the landlord in equity to have his rent paid in preference to the other debts of his tenant? Looking to the general interests of the community, these laws should be abolished, for their direct tendency is to drive away capital from the soil. I am clearly of opinion that the operation of these laws has been one of the chief causes of the present deplorable state of agriculture in this country.

5. The Report should, in my opinion, have recommended power being given to a tenant or his representatives to assign a lease under special circumstances, such as at the death of the tenant, or his insanity, or permanent disability from ill-health, to a suitable tenant farmer to be approved of by the landlord, the landlord, however, to have only one veto, and after the landlord has exercised such veto once, the matter to be referred to the judge ordinary or the sheriff in Scotland without power of appeal from the decision of either of them. And in case of the bankruptcy of a tenant his trustee should be entitled to take his place in the lease, and to dispose of it to a suitable and responsible assignee to be approved of as above for the benefit of the creditors.

6. The management of landed estates, regarding which explicit and valuable evidence has been given before the Commission, has been completely ignored in the Report. This, in my opinion, is a great omission, for the management of estates is one of the most important subjects upon which evidence has been given, and one which bears directly on the present lamentable state of agriculture in this country; ample evidence has been given to the Commission of the appointment of men to the management of estates who are unfitted for such a position from their want of practical knowledge of agriculture. Lawyers are often employed as land agents and factors for estates, and although they may be most excellent men in their profession, yet from this want of practical knowledge of agriculture and out-door management generally

there is not so much hope of the improvement of an estate but rather the reverse where it is placed fully under their charge. They are not so capable of giving the proprietor sound advice with regard to the choice of tenants and the improvement or management of the farms upon the estate, and are more inclined to draw money from the estate than to lay out any upon its improvements; they view most things through the medium of the law, and hence often disturb that kindly feeling that should exist between landlord and tenant. Stringently drawn leases, hard and fast law, are not the best ways to further the landed interest and the profitable cultivation of the soil.

It also happens that the management of an estate in Scotland is placed in hands of lawyers in large towns who are apt to employ men of the same profession in small towns in the country who have also little knowledge of practical agriculture in preference to experienced local estate factors who are practically acquainted with the management and cultivation of the soil. These estates themselves suffer from more ways than one, and the tenants upon them also suffer.

I am strongly of opinion that the Report, after the distinct evidence upon that point, should have called attention to the subject, and recommended landed proprietors to employ in the management of their estates local factors who are practically acquainted with agriculture, and who know how to encourage its advancement in every way.

It is gratifying to see from evidence that several of our largest and best proprietors form an exception to the above rule, for they employ both trained and practical men as managing factors on their estates, greatly to their own advantage and to that of the tenants and labourers.

EMIGRATION.

7. Emigration. — Evidence has been given that farmers' sons and agricultural labourers are leaving the country in increasing numbers, and it is highly probable that this exodus will continue unless a prospect of higher remuneration to both classes can be held out, a growing scarcity of labour and the withdrawal from the country of large numbers of young farmers is a serious evil threatening the future of our agriculture; and it must be borne in mind that while it is easy to drive off those whose experience and taste fit them for the successful cultivation of its soil, it is very difficult to recall them, and almost impossible to replace them.

JOHN CLAY.

Supplementary Memorandum by Mr. Howard.

With the exception of the recommendation as to the Law of Distress, the Report has my full concurrence. I consider the Law of Distress of no advantage to the best and largest landlords, who seldom, if ever, avail themselves of their powers; it is only of service to those landlords who, with this State guarantee, secure from tenants they would not otherwise have selected a high rent, paid in many cases at the expense of others. It is a preferential law unfair to other creditors, and in my opinion should be abolished.

CHARLES HOWARD.

Supplementary Memorandum by Mr. Paterson.

THOUGH signing the Report, I find it incumbent on me to enter my dissent to the proposals in regard to the maintenance of the In-door poor, and in regard to the Law of Distress.

While agreeing in the principle of rating personality for the maintenance of the poor, and for other burdens at present levied entirely on real property, I am unable to agree in the proposal of throwing the support of the In-door poor in England and Scotland on the Consolidated Fund, for by so doing a heavy burden would devolve on Scotland for the support of the poor of England.

To meet the charge on the Consolidated Fund it would be necessary to increase the income tax, and if this were done, and an extra rate levied on Scotland as well as England for this purpose, the former country would be called on to pay a sum equal to one half of the entire cost of its own poor and equal to three or four times the amount annually expended on In-door relief in Scotland.

The principles of the Poor Law Acts for the two countries are totally different, and it does appear to me that, if the In-door poor or the whole poor of England are to be supported out of the Consolidated Fund, the only equitable mode of meeting the cost will be by an extra rate of income tax levied in England alone.

With regard to the Law of Distress in England and the Act passed in 1880 for the purpose of abolishing Hypothec in Scotland, I am certainly of opinion that fresh legislation is required, and I trust it will culminate in the total abolition of both laws.

ROBERT PATERSON.

LONDON:
Printed by GEORGE E. B. KEENE and WILLIAM SCOTTESBROUGH,
Printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty,
For Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[3222.—1739.—7/52.]